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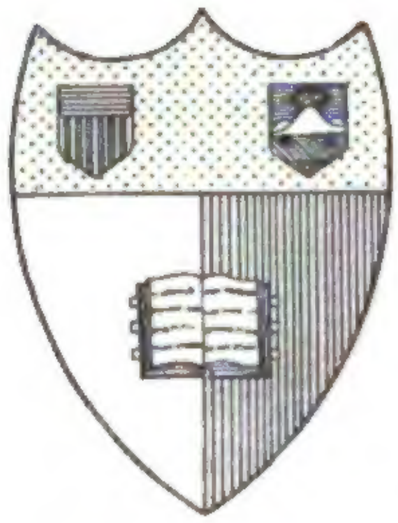


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THE STRAND MAGAZINE

An Illustrated Monthly



Vol. LXIII

JANUARY TO JUNE

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The Vindication of Louis de Rougemont.

NEW LIGHT ON A TWENTY-YEAR-OLD MYSTERY.

TWENTY odd years ago THE WIDE WORLD MAGAZINE *published a narrative that electrified the world — 'The Adventures of Louis de Rougemont.' It was translated into every civilized language, and Louis de Rougemont became the most-talked-of man of the day. Almost immediately, however, his statements were attacked, and finally, certain discrepancies being discovered, the public concluded that he was an imaginative impostor. Well-nigh heartbroken, but still protesting he had spoken the truth, and that some day the fact would be revealed, De Rougemont disappeared into obscurity. During the long years that ensued, whenever his name cropped up, it was always greeted with ridicule. Even when the poor old man died—in June of last year—some of his former critics thought fit to make final sneers at his veracity.*

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"ARRIVED IN HER SITTING-ROOM, SHE CLOSED THE DOOR. SHE HAD RATHER THE LOOK OF A TIGRESS AS SHE TURNED AND FACED ME."

(*See page* 12.)

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THE SINISTER QUEST OF NORMAN GREYES

by

E·PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

№2. "THE KISS OF JUDAS"

Sir Norman Greyes, the chief figure in this thrilling series of detective stories, having resigned his high position at Scotland Yard, makes a practice of studying the criminal world from the outsider's point of view..

ON the evening of my return from the Riviera after a three months' holiday, I was accosted in the lounge of Marridge's Hotel by a middle-aged man of inconspicuous appearance, who had been seated in a corner alone. It was some few seconds before I could recall him to my memory, but curiously enough a crowd of unpleasant associations gathered themselves together in my mind even before I recognized him.

"You haven't forgotten me and our golf down at Woking, Sir Norman?" he asked.

I knew all about him then.

"Mr. Stanfield, isn't it?" I said. "No, I haven't forgotten."

I was a few minutes early for my party, and I accepted the offer of a cocktail from my golfing acquaintance.

"That was an extraordinary interruption to our first game," he remarked. "I never fancied my little house much afterwards. I gave it up, in fact, within the year."

"I heard you had left," I told him. "Have you still your model domestic?"

"She left me soon afterwards," he replied, regretfully. "You had no luck in your investigations, Sir Norman?"

"I had no luck at all," I confessed. "Yet I don't despair. I always have the fancy that some day or other I shall solve that mystery."

The waiter brought the cocktails, and we raised our glasses.

"I drink, then, to that day, Sir Norman," my companion said.

"I am with you," I declared, heartily.

We talked idly of various matters for a few moments—principally of golf, which I had been playing regularly in the South of France. There were several dinner-parties being given in the restaurant that evening, and some very beautiful women were in evidence. One in particular attracted my attention. She was tall, and, though slim, beautifully made. Her complexion was perfect, although a little colourless. Her strange-coloured eyes had a nameless attraction. Her hair was just the shade of brown which appealed to me. She bowed to my companion as she passed, and joined a little group at the farther end of the hall. The last thing I noticed about her was her wonderful string of pearls.

"That is a very beautiful woman," I remarked. "Do you know who she is?"

"A South American widow—De Mendoza, her name is."

"You know her?"

"My humble apartment is on the same floor as her suite," my companion replied. "She is gracious enough sometimes to remember the fact that we meet occasionally in the lift."

My friends arrived, and I made my adieu to my erstwhile golfing acquaintance. Somehow or other, my meeting with him had left an unpleasant impression behind it. It had forced my thoughts back to the humiliating recollection of the fact that the murderer of Richard Ladbrooke still remained undiscovered, and that the man who had called himself Pugsley had walked away from detection under our very eyes and never

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been heard of since. Amongst my fellow-guests was an official of the Home Office, and our conversation naturally drifted into the subject of social order.

"Your connection with Scotland Yard having long since ceased, Sir Norman," he remarked to me, "you will not be over-sensitive as to facts. The epidemic of crime which was raging about two years ago seems to have broken out again with exactly the same results. There are four undetected murders and five great robberies up to the debit of your late department. Your people believe that the same person is at the head of them who planned all those robberies eighteen months ago, and escaped arrest by shooting the inspector."

I affected to take only a casual interest in the information, but, as a matter of fact, I was considerably moved. If the man who had last concealed his identity under the name of Pugsley, but whom I strongly suspected to be the notorious Michael Sayers, had really come out into the open once more, life would possess a new interest for me during the next few months.

We were a party of six that evening—a celebrated criminal lawyer and his wife, my friend from the Home Office, with his wife and sister-in-law, and myself. The criminal lawyer, who was our host, heard scraps of our conversation, and leaned forward.

"You did well to leave Scotland Yard when your reputation stood high, Sir Norman," he said. "A new era of crime has dawned, and the struggle is no longer equal. It isn't the riff-raff of the world to-day who take to murder and burglary. The skilled and conscienceless scientist has taken their place. The criminal of to-day, in nine cases out of ten, is of higher mental calibre than the detective opposed to him."

"The struggle should be the more interesting," I remarked, vaguely.

It was a fancy of mine that my continued interest in my profession should remain as little known as possible, and I talked for some time on indifferent subjects to the lady who was seated by my side. We admired Mrs. De Mendoza and her gorgeous rope of pearls. My host intervened.

"It is women like that," he commented, "who choose to deck their bodies with jewels of fabulous value, who encourage crime. Roughly speaking, I dare say that necklace is worth eighty thousand pounds. For purposes of theft it could probably be disposed of for fifty thousand. What a haul for the scientific thief! If it is really true that Pugsley is once more at work, what an opportunity!"

"A woman must be very brave," my hostess declared, "to run such risks."

"The jewels are probably in the hotel safe most of the time," I suggested. "I don't suppose she goes out in them."

Our host smiled.

"I can imagine Pugsley finding a few minutes in the hotel quite sufficient," he observed. "He or his successors, whoever they may be, would think little enough of human life by the side of, say, fifty thousand pounds. The modern maxim of the thief seems to be all or nothing. By killing at sight they certainly increase their chances of escape."

THAT closed our conversation upon the subject. We sat about in the lounge and drank coffee and liqueurs, danced for a time, and smoked a few cigarettes. The party broke up as the lights in the lounge were being lowered. I was the only one of our little gathering remaining in the hotel, and I was talking for a few moments to the head-porter, who was an old acquaintance of mine, when a man made a somewhat hurried entrance through the swing-doors, and seemed on the point of proceeding to the office. As he saw me, however, he hesitated, and, turning aside, addressed me.

"Excuse me, but are you Sir Norman Greyes?" he asked.

I admitted the fact.

"Can I ask you to give me five minutes of your time on a matter of urgent business?"

He drew a card from his pocket and handed it to me.

I stepped underneath one of the electric standards and looked at the card:—

Mr. Stanley Delchester,

and underneath was the name of a famous insurance company. I motioned him to follow me into the deserted lounge.

"Many years ago, Sir Norman," he reminded me, "when you were officially engaged at Scotland Yard, you saved our firm a great loss in the matter of the Hatton Garden emerald theft."

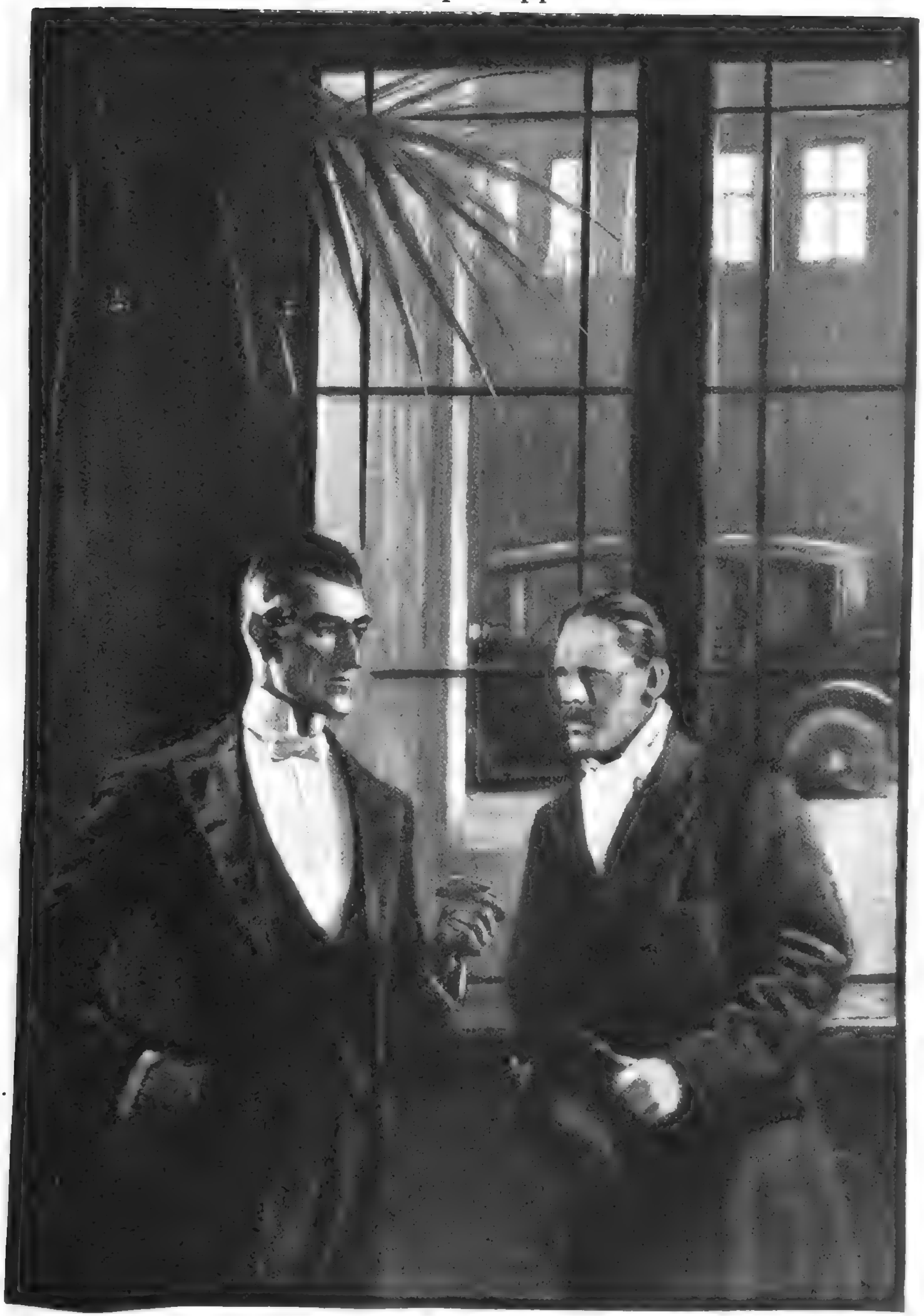
"I remember it quite well," I admitted.

"We understand," my visitor continued, "that you have now resigned from the Force, but we hoped that you might be inclined to undertake a small commission for us. It came to the ears of our chief quite unexpectedly that you were staying here, and he sent me after you at once."

"I can at least hear what the business is," I replied.

"There is staying in this hotel," the insurance-agent proceeded, "a Mrs. De Mendoza, the reputed widow of a fruit-merchant in Buenos Ayres. She is the fortunate possessor of a very wonderful pearl necklace, which she has insured with our firm for a hundred thousand pounds. Our acceptance

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"Can I ask you to give me five minutes of your time on a matter of urgent business?"

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of the policy was a grave error, which we recognized almost immediately afterwards. We know nothing of the lady, and in those circumstances it is against our business policy to accept the risk. We have done our best to protect ourselves, however. Since the policy was issued we have kept in constant touch with the lady, and in daily communication with the hotel detective. By to-night's post, however, we had a message from the latter to say that he was at home ill, and that during his absence his duties would be taken over by the night-watchman. The policy has only one more week to run, and will not, under any conditions, be renewed. We want to know if, for any fee which you care to name, you will do your best to guard the necklace for us during that week?"

"Have you had any intimation of thieves working in this neighbourhood?" I asked.

"None whatever," he replied. "I will be perfectly frank with you. It is not an ordinary robbery of which we are afraid. For some reason or other, our inquiry department has formed a dubious opinion of Mrs. De Mendoza herself."

"I see," I remarked. "You are afraid of a bogus theft?"

"Precisely! Directly we received the letter from the hotel detective we rang up the manager here. All that we could learn was that the illness was altogether unexpected, and that the man had been compelled to go home at a moment's notice. In reply to our request that a trained detective might take his place, the management assured us that they considered nothing of the sort necessary. No robbery of jewels had ever taken place from this hotel, and they considered their night-porter fully competent to watch over the interests of their guests."

I considered for a moment.

"Sir William Greaves, our manager, desired me to suggest a fee of two hundred guineas," my visitor concluded.

"I will accept the commission," I promised.

THE next morning I interviewed the manager of the hotel, to whom I was well known. He showed some irritation when I spoke of Mrs. De Mendoza's necklace and her nervousness concerning it.

"To be quite frank with you," he confessed, "although Mrs. De Mendoza is a good client, and pays her accounts regularly, I am inclined to be sorry that we ever let her the rooms."

"Why?" I asked.

"People with valuable jewellery should accept its possession with a certain resignation," he replied. "This is the last hotel in London where a jewel robbery would be likely. The lady herself, I understand, takes every possible care and caution. She wears her necklace nowhere except in the restaurant and lounge, and every night it is deposited in the hotel safe. I cannot see that she has the slightest cause for anxiety, nor do I understand the nervousness of the insurance company. However, you may rely upon it, Sir Norman, that every facility will be given to you in your task. I would suggest that you pay a visit to the lady herself."

The idea had already occurred to me, and later in the day I sent up my card to Mrs. De Mendoza, and was at once invited to enter her sitting-room. I found her writing letters, simply dressed in a black *négligée* and wearing the pearls. I was struck once more by the extreme elegance of her bearing and figure. As she turned and invited me to seat myself, she stirred in my memory a faint suggestion of reminiscence. I was not sure even then, however, whether it were a real person or a picture of which she reminded me. She listened to the few words with which I introduced myself, and smiled deprecatingly.

"It is true that I am very foolish," she admitted, "but then, I have always been a person of superstitions. I have owned my necklace for some years, and I have had it with me in quite lawless places. I have never, however, felt just the same amount of apprehension as I do at the present moment."

"That certainly seems strange," I replied. "The servants at this hotel are more carefully chosen than at any other hotel in London, and the guests are, in nearly every case, old clients."

"Apprehensions such as mine," she said, "are not based upon reason. However, I must confess that I feel more comfortable now that the insurance company has engaged your services. Would you not like to examine the pearls?"

She came over to my side and, without unclasping the necklace, let it rest in my hands. The pearls were all marvellously matched, all of considerable size, and with that milky softness which she pointed out to me as being a proof of their great perfection. As we stood there, necessarily close together, a wisp of her hair touched my forehead. Something in the timbre of her low laugh as she brushed it back induced me to look up. There were qualities about her smile, and the peculiar expression of her eyes, which gave me a momentary thrill. I understood at once why men turned their heads always to look at her.

"Do you admire my pearls?" she asked, softly.

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I let them slip from my palm.

"They are very wonderful," I admitted.

She moved slowly away. I breathed more easily as the distance increased between us. She looked over her shoulder unexpectedly, and I believe that she realized my sensation. The slight frown passed from her forehead. She was obviously more content.

"Tell me how you propose to guard my treasures, Sir Norman," she inquired, as she sank into an easy-chair. "Shall you stand behind my chair at dinner, disguised as a waiter, and lie on my mat at night? It gives one quite a shivery sensation to think of such espionage!"

"Believe me," I assured her, "I shall not be in the least obtrusive. I understand that you send your pearls down every night to the hotel safe?"

"I have always done so," she answered. "Do you think it would be better to keep them up here? Will you promise to sit in this easy-chair, with a revolver on your knee, all night, if I do so?"

"Not for the world," I declared. "The hotel safe is much the better place."

"I am glad to hear your decision," she said, with a slight smile. "I should sleep very little if I thought that my pearls were near me—and that you were sitting here, on guard. The idea would be disturbing."

"One cannot guard against miracles," I observed, "but I think you can make your mind quite easy about the necklace. If you should need me at any time, the number of my room is four hundred and thirty-two."

"On this floor?"

"On this floor."

"Tell me," she asked, a little abruptly, as I rose to take my leave, "who was the man with whom you were talking last night in the lounge—a slim, middle-aged man with a very hard face? I am always seeing him in the lift."

"A man I know scarcely anything of," I replied. "His name, I believe, is Stanfield. I once played golf with him down at Woking."

"Stanfield?" she repeated. "Was it in his grounds near Woking that a murder was committed—a policeman was found shot there?"

I nodded.

"I was playing golf with Mr. Stanfield at the time," I told her.

"And the murderer was never discovered?"

"Never!"

"I wonder you didn't take an interest in the case yourself," she remarked.

"I did," I told her.

She made a little grimace.

"My fears for my necklace are reawakened," she declared. "Surely it ought to have been an easy task for a clever man like you, one who used to be called a really great detective, to discover the murderer?"

"It is beyond my powers to bring him to justice, at any rate," I replied. "There are many criminals walking about to-day of whose guilt the police are perfectly well aware. They cannot be arrested, however, for lack of evidence."

"How thrilling!" she murmured. "Will you ask me to dine with you one night and tell me some of your adventures?"

"I shall be charmed," I assented.

ABOUT seven o'clock a note was brought into my room:—

Dear Sir Norman,—

A lady and her husband who were dining have disappointed me. Can you, by any chance, be my guest? If so, let us meet at eight o'clock in the lounge.—Hopefully yours,

BLANCHE DE MENDOZA.

I scribbled a line of acceptance. I felt, as I descended into the lounge that evening, a premonition that life for the next few hours was going to be very interesting indeed.

At eight o'clock precisely Mrs. De Mendoza came into the lounge. Her entrance made a mild sensation. Mr. Stanfield, who was seated in his accustomed corner, drinking his cocktail, watched our meeting and departure into the restaurant with obvious surprise.

"The little man was there again, who stares at me so much—Mr. Stanfield, I think you called him?" she remarked, as we took our places.

I nodded.

"I dare say he was surprised to see us together," I said. "I asked him who you were, on the night of my arrival here."

"Why?"

"For the same reason that a great many other people ask the same question," I replied.

She made a little grimace.

"You are determined to pay me no compliments this evening, and I am wearing my favourite gown."

"I admire your taste," I assured her.

"Anything else?"

"You are the best-dressed and the best-looking woman in the room."

"Too impersonal," she complained.

I turned the conversation to the subject of the necklace. The pearls were collected for her, she told me, by her husband, some in India, some in the Malay States, some in Paris, some in Rio. She spoke of him quite frankly—a prosperous fruit-broker who had achieved sudden opulence.

"It was quite as much a change for me

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as for him," she remarked. "I was a typist in Buenos Ayres before we were married. I have known what it is to be poor."

She answered all my questions without reserve, and I began to feel that I had been mistaken with regard to her, We took our coffee in the lounge afterwards. In the background, my golfing friend, Mr. Stanfield, was seated, smoking a cigar in a retired corner, and having the air of studying everyone who passed.

"He is quaint, that little man," my companion remarked once, as he glanced over towards us. "He reminds me of those impossible characters one reads about in magazines, who detect crime for the pleasure of it, and discover hidden treasures in absurd places."

"He is, as a matter of fact," I told her, "a retired City merchant with a passion for golf—at least, that is what the golf secretary at Woking told me."

The music was seductive, and presently we danced once or twice. In the ballroom, however, my companion showed signs of renewed nervousness. The fingers of one hand were nearly all the time straying around her neck, as though to assure herself that the necklace was still there. Presently she drew me away with an apologetic little laugh.

"I am quite mad," she confessed, "but I have a fit of nerves to-night. I am going upstairs early. Do you mind?"

"Of course not," I told her. "Let me see you to the lift."

"I am going to ask you to do more than that," she said, as we crossed the hall. "I am going to ask you to come up to my sitting-room and escort my maid down to the office when she takes my necklace there. As a reward, you can come back afterwards, if you will, and have a whisky-and-soda with me."

"I shall be very pleased," I acquiesced.

I RANG for the lift, and we ascended together to the fourth floor. She handed me her key, and I unlocked the door of her charming little *salon*. She pointed to the evening paper and an easy-chair.

"Please make yourself comfortable for five minutes," she begged, looking back from the threshold of the inner room. "I shall just let Annette help me out of my gown. Then I will give her the jewel-case and she shall call for you."

She nodded and disappeared. I stood for a moment looking after her. The door was closed softly. I heard her call to her maid in the farther apartment.

Those next few seconds seemed to beat themselves out in my brain, charged with a strange and almost amazing significance. I am convinced that I acted from impulse. There was nothing definite in my mind when from behind that closed door I conceived the sudden idea which prompted my action. I crossed the floor of the sitting-room and opened the door which led on to the corridor. There was no one in sight, and it seemed to me that fewer of the electric lights were lit than usual. I stood there, every nerve of my body riveted upon an attempt at dual listening. I listened for the return of Mrs. De Mendoza, and I listened for the opening of either of her doors. Presently, what I had divined might happen came to pass. The door of her bedroom, in a line with the one behind which I was lurking, opened. I peered through the crack. Annette, the maid, a trim, dark figure, had crossed the threshold. She stood for a moment, listening. Then, without even glancing towards the sitting-room, she walked swiftly along the corridor and turned to the left towards the lift and staircases. In a couple of stealthy strides I, too, had reached the corner, and, peering round, watched her movements. To my surprise, she passed the lift and turned the other corner of the corridor towards the staircase. As soon as she was out of sight I followed. As I reached the farther angle every light was suddenly extinguished. There was a little gurgling cry, the sound of a heavy fall upon the soft carpet. In a second or two I was on the spot. I could dimly see where Annette was lying, gasping for breath, apparently half unconscious. By her side lay the jewel-case, open and empty.

I did nothing for a moment towards raising any alarm. I bent over the girl and satisfied myself that she was not shamming—that she had, in effect, been subjected to a certain amount of violence. I glanced at the transoms over the doors of the bedrooms opposite. There were three of them between where I was and the turn to the lift. Suddenly the farthest door was opened, softly but not stealthily. A figure appeared and, leaning down, threw a pair of boots upon the mat. I suppose that I was dimly visible in the semi-gloom, for the man suddenly left off whistling and turned in my direction.

"Hallo, there!" he called out.

I drew from my pocket the little electric-torch which I had been keeping in readiness, and flashed it upon him. It was my friend Mr. Stanfield, in striped yellow-and-white pyjamas, a cigarette between his teeth, his feet encased in comfortable slippers.

"What the devil are you doing out there?" he demanded. "And who's turned the lights out?"

"Better turn them on, and you may see,"

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I replied. "There's a switch close to your door."

He found it after a second or two's fumbling, and stared at us in amazement. The maid, with her fingers still to her throat, had recovered sufficiently to sit up, and was leaning with her back to the wall, ghastly white and moaning to herself. The empty jewel-case told its own story.

"Jerusalem!" Mr. Stanfield exclaimed, breathlessly. "A robbery!"

"Ring your bell," I directed.

He disappeared into his room for a moment, leaving the door open. Presently he reappeared.

"I've rung all three," he announced.

"Then the wires have been cut," I answered, pointing to the register lower down, which had not moved. "Go to the lift and see if you can get anyone."

He was gone for about half a minute. I leaned down towards the girl, who was beginning to cry.

"Did you see who attacked you?" I asked.

"No," she sobbed. "All the lights went out suddenly. Someone came up from behind. I did not hear a sound—just the clutch at my throat and the choking."

"Why did you not wait for me, or go down by the lift?" I demanded.

She looked a little puzzled.

"I never go by the lift," she replied.

"Why not?"

"Fred, the second-floor valet, generally meets me on the floor below," she explained, reluctantly, "and——"

"I see," I interrupted. "But didn't your mistress tell you to wait and go down with me?"

The girl seemed surprised.

"My head is queer," she admitted, "and I cannot remember much, but madam said nothing to me except to tell me to hurry down."

The silence of the corridor was suddenly broken. Mr. Stanfield reappeared, followed by a little army of servants and the manager.

"Send everyone away except two men whom you can trust," I begged the latter. "Mrs. De Mendoza's necklace has been stolen."

There was a murmur of consternation and excitement. The manager selected two of the servants and dismissed the rest. He posted one by the lift and one by the staircase. I explained in a few words what had happened.

"Do you think the thief has got away?" he asked.

"One cannot tell," I replied. "I want to know about these three rooms."

He glanced at the numbers.

"The farthest one is occupied by Mr. Stanfield," he announced. "The other two are empty."

"You are sure that this one," I asked, pointing to the door close to where we stood, "is unoccupied?"

"Certain," was the confident reply. "Take my keys and see for yourself."

I was on the point of doing so when Mrs. De Mendoza appeared. She was clad in a wonderful light-blue wrapper, and the touch of excitement seemed to add to her beauty.

"My necklace!" she gasped. "Don't tell me that it is gone!"

"Madam," the manager began, "I regret to say——"

"What were you doing, then?" she cried, turning to me. "Do you mean to say that it was stolen whilst Annette was with you?"

"Annette was never with me," I replied. "She left your bedroom with the jewel-case without coming near the sitting-room."

"Is this true, Annette?" her mistress demanded.

"But why not, madam?" Annette faltered. "You said nothing to me about going into the sitting-room. I did not know that monsieur was to accompany me."

"The girl is telling a falsehood," Mrs. De Mendoza declared, angrily.

"Could these matters wait for a moment?" I intervened. "Our immediate task is to try and recover the necklace. I wish everyone to leave this place—except you, sir," I added, addressing the manager, "and myself."

THE manager was a person of determination, and in a moment or two the corridor was empty. Mr. Stanfield lingered on the threshold of his room.

"Can I remain?" he inquired. "In a way I am interested, as my room is so near."

The manager waved him back.

"I desire to hear what Sir Norman has to say, alone," he insisted.

Mr. Stanfield reluctantly withdrew. We first of all entered the room opposite to us. It was empty, and apparently undisturbed. There was a connecting door on the left.

"Where does that lead to?" I asked.

The manager unlocked it. It led into a similar room, also empty. The room on the other side was Mr. Stanfield's, also connecting. The outlook of all three was on to some mews.

We withdrew into the first one we had entered.

"Will you lend me that master-key of yours?" I begged.

The manager detached it from his chain and handed it to me.

"If you should be instrumental in recovering the necklace, Sir Norman," he said,

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"'My necklace!' she gasped. 'Don't tell me that it is

" the hotel authorities would appreciate all possible reticence in the matter."

I nodded.

" It is hard to keep anything out of the Press, nowadays," I reminded him, " but so far as I am concerned you may rely upon my discretion."

THE few days that followed were filled with hysterical and irritating appeals, complaints, and inquiries from Mrs. De Mendoza herself, the insurance company, and the management. No efforts on our part could keep the affair out of the newspapers, and the disappearance of the necklace became the universal subject of conversation. On the sixth day after the robbery, I felt that a brief escape was necessary. I proposed to Mr. Stanfield, whom I met in the hall of the hotel, that we went down to Woking and had a round of golf, an arrangement to which he agreed with avidity. We lunched at the club-house, and, as on the previous occasion, we played a careful and hard-fought game. It was on the eighteenth tee when one of those unexplained moments of inspiration came to me which serve as the landmarks of life. We had spoken of that grim tragedy which had interrupted our first game. I thought of poor Ladbrooke lying there with a bullet-hole in his forehead; Janet, the maid, serene and secretive, with the strange eyes and unruffled manner. The memory of these things came back to me as I stood there, with the wet wind fluttering in the leaves of the trees and Stanfield filling his pipe by my side, and it seemed as though my faculties were suddenly prompted by a new vigour and a new insight. Supposing it had been the maid who had killed the prying stranger! What was her motive? Whom was she trying to shield? Could it be her master? And if her master's name were not Stanfield, might it not be Pugsley? The two men were of the same height and build, and the one thing which Rimmington had always insisted upon was Pugsley's genius for disguise. The pieces of my puzzle fell together like magic, and with them the puzzle of the necklace. I turned back to the tee, and I was suddenly conscious of my companion's intense gaze. His eyes seemed to be boring their way into the back of my head. I knew that something in my face had given me away.

" Your honour," he said, tersely.

I topped my drive miserably. My companion's drive went sailing down the course, and he halved the match in a perfectly-played four. We walked together to the club-house.

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gone!' 'Madam,' the manager began, 'I regret to say— '"

"A whisky-and-soda?" I suggested.

"I'll change my shoes first," he answered, turning towards the dressing-room.

I drank my whisky-and-soda, exchanged greetings with a few acquaintances, and paid my bill. Then I went to look for Stanfield. I might have spared myself the trouble. He and the taxi had alike disappeared. I had to wait whilst they telephoned for another, and I travelled up to London alone.

THE game was played out in quite the grand fashion. On my arrival at the hotel, I found the representative of the insurance company waiting to see me, and I was told that Mrs. De Mendoza was in her room. Accompanied by the manager, we made our way thither. I think that she was well prepared for what was coming, or rather one part of it. She received us a little impatiently.

"I have been waiting to hear from your firm all day," she said, addressing Delchester. "My jewellers who valued the pearls, and my legal adviser, have helped to make out my claim. I am anxious to know when I may expect your cheque."

"I am thankful to say, madam, that that will not be necessary," the manager announced, stepping forward. "Here is your necklace."

He handed it to her. She stared at it like a woman transfixed. There were no signs of joy in her face. She seemed, indeed, for the moment stricken with consternation.

"When was it found?" she demanded, breathlessly.

"About four o'clock on the morning after the theft," I told her.

"But where?"

"If you will come with me," I replied, "I will show you."

I led the way down the corridor to the exact spot where Annette had been attacked, and opened the door of the nearest room. I saw Mrs. De Mendoza start when she saw the heavy bolt which had been fitted to the communicating door.

"I came to the conclusion," I explained, "that the theft was committed by someone hiding in one of these three rooms, and to the further conclusion that the necklace had been hidden on the spot."

"How did you guess that?" she inquired.

"Because the thief made a slight blunder," I answered. "For a single moment, as I stood by Annette's side in the darkness outside, I saw a light flash out through the transom of this room. I must admit, however," I went on, "that it took me four hours to find the necklace."

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"Where was it, then?" she asked, curiously.

I turned up the rug. In one of the planks of the wooden floor was a knot. I took a little corkscrew gimlet from my pocket, bored through it, and drew it out. Then I made Delchester push his finger through. There was a hook fastened in the underneath side of the floor.

"The necklace was hanging there," I told him. "I imagine it would have been found later on by someone making a point of occupying this room. As a matter of fact, I believe it was booked for the first week in June."

"By whom?" Mrs. De Mendoza demanded.

"By Mr. Stanfield," I replied. "He is paying a return visit in June, and he appears to prefer this room to the one he is occupying at present.

There was a brief silence. Delchester held out his hand.

"We are very much obliged to you, Sir Norman," he declared. "Our insurance, as you know, expired at midday to-day. I need not say that it will not be renewed. I wish you all good afternoon."

He took his leave. The manager appealed to me.

"Sir Norman," he said, "there is a great deal in this matter which it is hard to understand. I hope that you will not consider it a case for the police?"

I turned to Mrs. De Mendoza.

"Do you wish to prosecute?" I asked. "There is a certain amount of circumstantial evidence which might be collected."

"Against whom?"

"Against the gentleman whom we have known as Mr. Stanfield."

She laughed scornfully.

"That funny little man who sits about in the lounge? I would as soon believe that you yourself were the thief, Sir Norman! I have my necklace back, and that is all I care about," she concluded.

THE manager departed, very much relieved. Mrs. De Mendoza beckoned me to follow her to her suite. Arrived in her sitting-room, she closed the door. She had rather the look of a tigress as she turned and faced me. Never was a woman born of more splendid courage.

"And the epilogue?" she asked.

"I fear," I replied, "that the epilogue must be postponed. It was only to-day, on Woking golf links, that a certain little scene of eighteen months ago became reconstructed in my mind. I saw a motiveless crime explained. I realized by whose hand that bullet might have found its way into Ladbrooke's brain, and for whose sake."

"Yet you let him go!" she cried.

"If I had dreamed," I said, slowly, "that it was possible for him to escape, even for an hour, I would have wrung the breath from his body first. As it is, I must admit that he has scored a trick. But you must remember, or perhaps you have yet to find out," I went on, "that the world where such a man can live is a very small place."

"And what about me?" she asked. "From the moment when I heard that you had gone out with him alone, I could foresee what was coming. Yet I was not afraid. I waited for you."

I looked at the necklace and shrugged my shoulders.

"It is hard to leave a hundred thousand pounds," I pointed out, "and so far as you realized, the game was not up. Not a soul in this hotel knew that the necklace was in the manager's safe. Yet you had courage to remain and see the thing through. I admit that."

She came a little nearer to me. The green lights in her eyes were soft. I felt the attraction of her as she meant me to.

"Where I love," she said, "I have courage, and my love has every quality which the devil ever distilled, except constancy. Are you afraid of me, Sir Norman, because I killed a man who——"

"A confession," I muttered.

She laughed.

"No witnesses," she reminded me. "After all, it was you who once said that murder was the easiest of crimes. What you know and what I know will never take me to the dock. Would you put me there if you could, my enemy?"

I drew a little away. Her breath was almost upon my cheek, her lips had taken to themselves the curve of invitation.

"I would put you there without a moment's hesitation," I retorted. "You killed a man in cold blood to shield a murderer and a criminal. The hand of justice is slow, especially where evidence is scanty, but in the end it grips."

She laughed scornfully.

"You speak in ignorance," she declared. "At least be friends," she went on, "until you can drag me to the gallows. I shot him with my right hand."

She held out her left fingers. I raised them to my lips.

"The kiss of Judas," I warned her.

"You will need more than his cunning," she answered.

Next month: "The Menwood Road Bank Robbery."

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PAINTING AS A PASTIME

by

THE RT. HON. WINSTON CHURCHILL

WITH REPRODUCTIONS OF HIS PAINTINGS

Part II.

I MUST say I like bright colours. I agree with Ruskin in his denunciation of that school of painting who "eat slate-pencil and chalk, and assure everybody that they are nicer and purer than strawberries and plums." I cannot pretend to feel impartial about the colours. I rejoice with the brilliant ones, and am genuinely sorry for the poor browns. When I get to heaven I mean to spend a considerable portion of my first million years in painting, and so get to the bottom of the



Vesuvius, from Pompeii.

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subject. But then I shall require a still gayer palette than I get here below. I expect orange and vermilion will be the darkest, dullest colours upon it, and beyond them there will be a whole range of wonderful new colours which will delight the celestial eye.

Chance led me one autumn to a secluded nook on the Côte d'Azur, between Marseilles and Toulon, and there I fell in with one or two painters who revelled in the methods of the modern French school. These were disciples of Cézanne. They view Nature as a mass of shimmering light in which forms and surfaces are comparatively unimportant, indeed hardly visible, but which gleams and glows with beautiful harmonies and contrasts of colour. Certainly it was of great interest to me to come suddenly in contact with this entirely different way of looking at things. I had hitherto painted the sea flat, with long, smooth strokes of mixed pigment in which the tints varied only by gradations. Now I must try to represent it by innumerable small separate lozenge-shaped points and patches of colour—often pure colour—so that it looked more like a tessellated pavement than a marine picture. It sounds curious. All the same, do not be in a hurry to reject the method. Go back a few yards and survey the result. Each of these little points of colour is now playing his part in the general effect. Individually invisible, he sets up a strong radiation, of which the eye is conscious without detecting the cause. Look also at the blue of the Mediterranean. How can you depict and record it? Certainly not by any single colour that was ever manufactured. The only way in which that luminous intensity of blue can be simulated is by this multitude of tiny points of varied colour all in true relation to the rest of the scheme. Difficult? Fascinating!

Nature presents itself to the eye through the agency of these individual points of light, each of which sets up the vibrations peculiar to its colour. The brilliancy of a picture must therefore depend partly upon the frequency with which these points are found on any given area of the canvas, and partly on their just relation to one another. Ruskin says in his "Elements of Drawing," from



The Valley of the Brora, Sutherlandshire.

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Mells, Somersetshire.

which I have already quoted, "You will not, in Turner's largest oil pictures, perhaps six or seven feet long by four or five high, find one spot of colour as large as a grain of wheat ungradated." But the gradations of Turner differ from those of the modern French school by being gently and almost imperceptibly evolved one from another instead of being boldly and even roughly separated; and the brush of Turner followed the form of the objects he depicted, while our French friends often seem to take a pride in directly opposing it. For instance, they would prefer to paint a sea with up and down strokes rather than with horizontal; or a tree-trunk from right to left rather than up and down. This, I expect, is due to falling in love with one's theories, and making sacrifices of truth to them in order to demonstrate fidelity and admiration.

But surely we owe a debt to those who have so wonderfully vivified, brightened, and

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illuminated modern landscape painting. Have not Manet and Monet, Cézanne and Matisse, rendered to painting something of the same service which Keats and Shelley gave to poetry after the solemn and ceremonious literary perfections of the eighteenth century? They have brought back to the pictorial art a new draught of *joie de vivre*; and the beauty of their work is instinct with gaiety, and floats in sparkling air.

I do not expect these masters would particularly appreciate my defence, but I must avow an increasing attraction to their work. Lucid and exact expression is one of the first characteristics of the French mind. The French language has been made the instrument of that admirable gift. Frenchmen talk and write just as well about painting as they have done about love, about war, about diplomacy, or, we may add, cooking. Their terminology is precise and complete. They are therefore admirably equipped to be teachers in the theory of any of these arts. Their critical faculty is so powerfully developed that it is perhaps some restraint upon achievement. But it is a wonderful corrective to others as well as to themselves.

My French friend, for instance, after looking at some of my daubs, took me round the galleries of Paris, pausing here and there. Wherever he paused, I found myself before a picture which I particularly admired. He then explained that it was quite easy to tell, from the kind of things I had been trying to do, what were the things I liked. Never having taken any interest in pictures till I tried to paint, I had no preconceived opinions.

I just felt, for reasons I could not fathom, that I liked some much more than others. I was astonished that anyone else should, on the most cursory observation of my work, be able so surely to divine a taste which I had never consciously formed. My friend says that it is not a bad thing to know nothing at all about pictures, but to have a matured mind trained in other things and a new strong interest for painting. The elements are there from which a true taste in art can be formed with time and guidance, and there are no obstacles or imperfect conceptions in



On the Rance, near St. Malo.

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The Terrace, Lympne.

the way. I hope this is true. Certainly the last part is true.

Once you begin to study it, all Nature is equally interesting and equally charged with beauty. I was shown a picture by Cézanne of a blank wall of a house, which he had made instinct with the most delicate lights and colours. Now I often amuse myself when I am looking at a wall or a flat surface of any kind by trying to distinguish all the different colours and tints which can be discerned upon it, and considering whether these arise from reflections or from natural hue. You would be astonished the first time you tried this to see how many and what beautiful colours there are even in the most commonplace objects, and the more carefully and frequently you look the more variations do you perceive.

But these are no reasons for limiting oneself to the plainest and most ordinary objects and scenes. Mere prettiness of scene, to be sure, is not needed for a beautiful picture. In fact, artificially made pretty places are very often a hindrance to a good picture. Nature will hardly stand a double process of beautification: one layer of idealism on top of another is too much of a good thing. But a vivid scene, a brilliant atmosphere, novel and charming lights, impressive contrasts, if they strike the eye all at once, arouse an interest and an ardour which will certainly be reflected in the work which you try to do, and will make it seem easier.

It would be interesting if some real authority investigated carefully the part which memory plays in painting. We look at the object with an intent regard, then at the palette, and thirdly at the canvas. The canvas receives a message dispatched usually a few seconds before from the natural object. But it has come through a post-office *en route*. It has been transmitted in code. It has been turned from light into paint. It reaches the canvas a cryptogram. Not until it has been placed in its correct relation to everything else that is on the canvas or that has yet to be put upon the canvas can it be deciphered, is its meaning apparent, is it translated once again from mere pigment into light. And the light this time is not of Nature but of Art. The whole of this

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considerable process is carried through on the wings or the wheels of memory. In most cases we think it is the wings—airy and quick like a butterfly from flower to flower. But all heavy traffic and all that has to go a long journey must travel on wheels.

In painting in the open air the sequence of actions is so rapid that the process of translation into and out of pigment may seem to be unconscious. But all great landscapes have been painted indoors, and often long after the first impressions were gathered. In a dim cellar the Dutch or Italian master recreated the gleaming ice of a Netherlands carnival or the lustrous sunshine of Venice or the Campagna. Here, then, is required a truly formidable memory of the ocular kind. Not only do we develop our powers of observation, but also those of carrying the record—of carrying it through an extraneous medium and of reproducing it, hours, days, or even months after the scene has vanished or the sunlight died.

I was told by a friend that when Whistler guided a school in Paris he made his pupils observe their model on the ground floor, and then run upstairs and paint their picture piece by piece on the floor above. As they became more proficient he put their easels up a storey higher, till at last the *élite* were scampering with their decision up six flights into the attic—praying it would not evaporate on the way. This is, perhaps, only a tale. But it shows effectively of what enormous importance a trained, accurate, retentive memory must be to an artist; and conversely what a useful exercise painting may be for the development of an accurate and retentive memory.

There is no better exercise for the would-be artist than to study and devour a picture, and then, without looking at it again, to attempt the next day to reproduce it. Nothing can more exactly measure the progress both of observation and memory. It is still harder to compose out of many separate, well-retained impressions, aided though they be by sketches and colour notes, a new complete conception. But this is the only way in which great landscapes have been painted—or can be painted. The size of the canvas alone precludes its being handled



Ightham Moat.

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out of doors. The fleeting light imposes a rigid time-limit. One cannot go back day after day without the picture getting stale. The painter must choose between a rapid impression, fresh and warm and living, but probably deserving only of a short life, and the cold, profound, intense effort of memory, knowledge, and will-power, prolonged perhaps for weeks, from which a masterpiece can alone result. It is much better not to fret too much about the latter. Leave to the masters of art trained by a lifetime of devotion the wonderful process of picture-building and picture-creation. Go out into the sunlight and be happy with what you see.



Thunderstorm: Nice.

Painting is complete as a distraction. I know of nothing which, without exhausting the body, more entirely absorbs the mind. Whatever the worries of the hour or the threats of the future, once the picture has begun to flow along there is no room for them in the mental screen. They pass out into shadow and darkness. All one's mental light, such as it is, is concentrated on the task. Time stands respectfully aside, and it is only after many hesitations that luncheon knocks gruffly at the door. When I have had to stand up on parade, or even, I regret to say, in church, for half an hour at a time, I have always felt that the erect position is not natural to man, has only been painfully acquired, and is only with fatigue and difficulty maintained. But no one who is fond of painting finds the slightest inconvenience in standing to paint for three or four hours at a time or for seven or eight hours in a day. Not, at least, as long as the interest holds.

Lastly, let me say a word on painting as a spur to travel. There is really nothing like it. Every country where the sun shines and every district in it has a theme of its own. The lights, the atmosphere, the aspect, the spirit, are all different; but each has its native charm. Even if you are only a poor painter you can feel the influence of the scene, guiding your brush, selecting the tubes you squeeze on to the palette. Even if you cannot portray it as you see it, you feel it, you know it, and you admire it for ever. When people rush about Europe in the train from one glittering centre of work or pleasure into another, passing—at enormous expense—through a series of mammoth hotels and blatant carnivals, they little know what they are missing, and how cheaply priceless things can be obtained. The painter wanders and loiters contentedly from place to place, always on the look-out for some brilliant butterfly of a picture which

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can be caught and set up and carried safely home. All he asks for is sunshine, and if it be really true that we are to have thirty-five years of drought, there ought to be no difficulty about supplying that. Côte d'Azur, Côte d'Argent, Côte d'Emeraude all present to him their world-famed beauties, which neither crowds nor casinos are needed to enhance.

Sir William Orpen advised me to visit Avignon on account of its wonderful light, and certainly there is no more delightful centre for a would-be painter's activities: then Egypt, fierce and brilliant, presenting in infinite variety the single triplex theme of the Nile, the desert, and the sun; or Palestine, a land of rare beauty—the beauty of the turquoise and the opal—which well deserves the attention of some real artist, and has never been portrayed to the extent that is its due. And what of India? Who has ever interpreted its lurid splendours? But after all, if only the sun will shine, one does not need to go beyond one's own country. There is nothing more intense than the burnished steel and gold of a Highland stream; and at the beginning and close of almost every day the Thames displays to the citizens of London glories and delights which one must travel far to rival.

I end where I began; I hope sincerely that these notes and sketches may encourage others to find out whether they have not got within them that love of colour and faculty of observation which will enable them to enrich their leisure with the delightful amusement of painting. At any rate I shall dwell in the comfortable expectation of stirring some slumbering genius into action, or at least of investing a modest life with a new sense of fullness, security, and independence.



At the Pyramids.

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FIGHTING SNUB REILLY

By EDGAR WALLACE

ILLUSTRATED BY STEVEN SPURRIER R.O.I

TEN minutes before Snub Reilly left his dressing-room, a messenger delivered a letter. His seconds and his manager protested against his reading anything which might well be disturbing at such a critical moment, for the little man was fighting for his title, and Curly Boyd, the aspirant to championship honours, had knocked out four successive opponents before he claimed his right to a meeting with the world champion.

"Let me see it," said Snub, and he was something of an autocrat.

The letter was typewritten and was signed by two reputable men whose names were honoured in the sporting world.

Snub read the letter slowly.

"A challenge," he said, tersely, "for ten thousand pounds a side."

"Who is the feller?" asked the manager.

"They call him 'An Unknown'—he wants to meet the winner of to-night's fight. Send a wire and say I accept."

The manager grinned.

"Better wait till after the fight?" he suggested.

"Send it," said Snub, curtly, and put on his dressing-gown and that queer grimace of his at one and the same time.

Snub Reilly's "fighting face" was not pretty. It wrinkled up his nose and twisted his mouth to a sneer. Some say it was designed to scare the opposition; some explained it as "nerves." Snub was sensitive on the matter, for even fighters have their amiable weaknesses. He was never photographed except in the ring, so that the world knew Snub by such snaps and films as showed a puckered face, a mouth awry, and the dishevelment of hair which comes from the strenuous exchanges of the ring.

This night the public glimpse of him was brief, and Curly Boyd, his opponent, had himself to thank for such an early ending to his rosy dreams. He had detected, as he thought, a certain unsteadiness in Snub's leg movements and a hint of anxiety showing through his grimace. So Curly, relying upon his excellent fitness, had put everything into a projected left and right. Incidentally he was fighting the greatest ring strategist of his day, and when he uncovered his jaw for the fraction of a second——

"Eight—nine—ten—out!" said a far-away voice in Curly's ear. Somebody shook him by his gloved hand, and he heard above the roaring in his head a louder roar, and dropped his head wearily to catch a glimpse of a figure in a flowered dressing-gown, slipping through the gangway into the gloom behind the ring seats.

It was a fine thing for Snub, because the eyes of the world were on that fight—outside the building limousines were parked twenty deep—and before he reached his dressing-room the news of his victory was quivering in dots and dashes on every line and cable that ran from the city.

Ten minutes after the fight he left the building by a side door and mingled with the thousands who crowded about the entrances. Modesty was Snub Reilly's favourite vice.

The echoes of such a combat were not to die down in a day, for Snub was something of a national hero. This champion, who never gave interviews, who was so taciturn and secretive that his very seconds did not meet him until the day before his fights, appealed to the popular imagination as no other ring favourite had done. And when at the end of the Press description it was announced that "An Unknown" had challenged the winner for a purse of ten thousand pounds,

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and the challenge had been accepted, there was an added value to the news.

Even staid and sleepy Rindle, dedicated to the education of youth, was excited, wildly excited for Rindle. The headmaster read the account of the fight at breakfast, and hummed and hawed his approval of the lightning stroke which laid the presumptuous Curly Boyd so low.

And on the opposite side of the breakfast table, Vera Shaw, nineteen and beautiful, hid a newspaper on her lap, read furtively, and was thrilled. A group of boys *en route* from their dormitories to prayers and morning school gathered about one daring soul who had broken all school regulations and purchased forbidden literature, and whooped joyously.

It was natural that Barry Tearle, the mathematical master, should stop in the midst of correcting exercises, hitch up his gown at the neck for comfort, and sit back to study the account. Natural, because he was also games master and instructor of the noble art to Rindle School.

He put down the paper with a thoughtful frown and went back to his exercises, lighting his pipe mechanically the while. Presently he gathered the papers together and rose. The bell was clanging the warning for prayers in Hall. He was hurrying across the quadrangle and under the archway, when he heard his name called.

He turned quickly, startled almost, and swept off his cap. It was Vera.

"I saw you come home this morning."

"Did—did you? My car had a breakdown near Northwood—I hope I didn't disturb you?"

No errant boy called to his study to explain a delinquency could have looked more patently guilty than he, and she laughed, and when Vera Shaw laughed it required all his self-possession to behave sanely.

"No, you didn't disturb me. I couldn't sleep and was sitting at the window approving the moon when you sneaked into the quad.—there is no other word for it. Did you see the fight?" she asked suddenly, and he gasped.

"No, I did *not* see the fight," he said, severely, "and I'm surprised——"

"Pooh!" She flicked her finger at him. "I've read every bit about it. Do tell me who is 'An Unknown' who is going to fight that darling Snub—run, you'll be late!"

He was the first to leave after the final "Amen." She was standing where he had left her, but Sellinger was with her, and, forgetful of the admirable charity toward all men which he had so recently intoned, Barry cursed Sellinger most heartily.

John Sellinger lived in Rindle; his ancestors had founded Rindle School, and he himself assumed the style and manner and mental attitude of hereditary patron saint to the school. He was tall, overtopping Barry by six inches, florid, well-fed, and prosperous. He was good-looking, too, in a heavy, aquiline way. And he made no secret that his patronage of Rindle might extend to acquiring relationship with its headmaster.

"Morning, Tearle. I suppose you didn't see the fight?"

"No, I *didn't* see the fight," said Barry, savagely. "Have I nothing better to do? Did you?" he asked suddenly.

"Yes, rather—I was just telling Vera all about it. Wonderful fellow, Reilly. Smaller even than you."

"Is it possible?" asked Barry, affecting an extravagant surprise. "Could you see him?"

"Don't be sarcastic," said Mr. Sellinger. "Of course you could see him. He isn't a beauty, I can tell you—lop-sided face—you've seen the picture in the papers?—but, boy, he's a fighter!"

"So I've heard," said Barry, wearily.

"As to the unknown idiot who wants to fight him——"

"Good morning," said Barry, shortly, and, with a lift of his hat, went on.

"CURIOUS fellow, that." Sellinger shook his head. "Can't quite make him out, Vera."

"Mr. Sellinger." Her tone was very quiet.

"Yes, Vera?"

"Will you please not call me by my Christian name?"

He was surprised and hurt.

"But, my dear child——"

"But I'm not your dear child," she said, in the same voice. "I'm not even a child."

"Of course, if you wish it, Ve—Miss—er—Shaw, by all means. I'm sorry if I've offended you."

He was not sorry, except for himself, of course; but it was the kind of reply that a representative of the oldest family in the county should make.

"You haven't offended me—only I don't like it. Why do you think that Mr. Tearle is curious?"

"Well," he hesitated, "a schoolmaster isn't the best paid professional in the world, and yet Tearle lives in style, has a car of his own, is always dressed well."

She looked at him in that weary, patient way which women can make so offensive.

"Other people have money—you have money—and yet it isn't curious," she said, coldly; "or do you think it is curious because you haven't got it all?"

He smiled indulgently.

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"How like you to defend him!" he said, and before indignation could permit an appropriate reply he went on: "Did your father say whether the School Extension Committee was meeting at the usual hour?"

She shook her head and half turned to go.

"I wish——" he began, and stopped.

"You wish?"

"Well——" This time his halt of speech was less natural. "I wish that other arrangements would be made about——"

"About what?"

She was exasperated by his studied hesitations, but she was curious.

"About the money that has been raised for the School Extension. It is a tremendous sum for a—well, for an ill-paid master to handle."

He knew he had made a mistake before the words were out, for the girl's face had gone from crimson to white as the drift of his meaning appeared.

"Do you"—she was breathless, and her voice sounded strange even to herself; "do you—mean to suggest that Mr. Tearle—gets his money for motor-cars—oh, it's too absurd—too wicked! How dare you!"

He blinked at her in amazement. He had never regarded her as anything but a soft, fluffy, kitteny thing and a possible ornament to his gloomy house. He looked aghast upon a fury; her grey eyes, dark with passion, her lips straight drawn and unbecoming.

"My dear——" he began.

"You must have an evil mind to think such things," she flamed. "I hate you!"

He stood as a man petrified until she had disappeared through the porch of Dr. Shaw's study.

"Very unbecoming," he spluttered to



"Vera was standing where he had left her, but Sellinger was with her."

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himself, fuming; "very unladylike — very unnecessary——"

DR. SHAW came in to lunch ten minutes earlier than Vera had expected, and brought Sellinger with him, to the girl's intense annoyance.

"I've asked Sellinger to stay to lunch, Vera," he said. "Will you tell Mrs. Burdon to put another place at the table? We have a meeting of the Extension Committee this afternoon and I cannot send Mr. Sellinger all the way back."

A more sensitive man than Sellinger might have been hurt by the apology for his invitation; but Sellinger was not that kind of man. He smiled graciously upon the girl, and in that smile conveyed a tacit agreement that what had happened that morning should be overlooked and forgotten.

Fortunately for Vera, there was little need for her to speak, for the conversation centred about the afternoon committee meeting. When Tearle's name came into the conversation it was Dr. Shaw who was responsible.

"There was rather an unpleasant little incident this morning in town," he said—and when those of Rindle School referred to "town" they meant all that part of Rindle which was not school. "I don't know what started it, but I'm quite sure the boy was not in the wrong."

"Is one of the boys in trouble, father?" asked Vera, quickly.

"Well, not exactly in trouble. You remember—do you know the man Crickley—he has a tumbledown shanty on the Jamaica Road?"

She nodded.

"An awful ruffian," she said; "he was at court last year, and he drinks, doesn't he?"

"I should imagine he had been drinking this morning. He was going through the town with his unfortunate wife, and apparently something she said disagreed with him—at any rate, the brute hit her first with his stick, and although I don't suppose he hurt her very much, one of the boys of the fifth—young Tilling, to be exact—who happened to be passing, interfered——"

"Good for him!" said the girl, her eyes sparkling.

Dr. Shaw smiled.

"It looked like being bad for him," he said. "For the blackguard turned his attention to the boy, and had him by the scruff of the neck, according to accounts, when Tearle, who was going over to the higher mathematical set, came upon the scene. I understand he asked the man very civilly to release the boy; whereupon he certainly loosed his hold of the boy, but he struck at Tearle."

The girl opened her mouth in consternation.

"Was he—was he hurt?" she asked.

"No, I don't think he was," the doctor chuckled, quietly. "Tearle, you know——" he turned to Sellinger, "is our games master, and a rattling good instructor in boxing. I saw the captain of the school, who witnessed the encounter, and he is most enthusiastic about what followed."

"Did he strike the man? Was there a brawl?" asked Sellinger, ready to be shocked.

"I don't think there was much of a brawl, but he certainly struck the man," said the doctor, dryly. "Crickley had to be assisted away."

Sellinger shook his head heavily.

"I don't know whether that sort of thing is good for Rindle," he said, in his capacity of patron saint.

"Nonsense!" said the doctor, sharply, and the girl beamed upon her father. "A most excellent lesson and example to the boys. It means, of course, that the boys in Tearle's form will give themselves airs, but it is what I would term a most excellent thing to have happened."

Sellinger was discreetly silent on this conclusion.

"I TALKED to Tearle after school," Dr. Shaw went on. "Of course, Tearle was most apologetic." He paused and frowned. "Do you know, Vera," he said, "I had the most extraordinary impression when I was speaking to Tearle. In this morning's paper—which, of course, you haven't read, my dear, at least not the part that I am referring to—there was a reference to a challenge which had been issued by a certain Unknown to the boxer, Snub Reilly."

"You don't mean that——" she said, breathlessly.

"Yes, I had that impression—that Tearle was the Unknown. You see, I mentioned the fight of the previous evening, and I talked to him about the challenge, just as I might talk to Sellinger here in an ordinary, matter-of-fact way. And do you know that he went as red as a beetroot?"

Sellinger laughed loud and heartily.

"That would be too absurd," he said, contemptuously. "I grant that our friend Tearle may be an excellent boxer, but an excellent amateur has no earthly chance against even a third-class professional, and Snub Reilly is at the top of his class."

Dr. Shaw shrugged.

"I agree it is ridiculous," he said.

"Besides," Sellinger went on, enlarging his argument, "before that match can occur, somebody has got to find ten thousand pounds, and ten thousand pounds is a lot of money——"

Vera was looking at him, and their eyes

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met. She saw in his the dawn of a great suspicion, and her hand gripped the handle of her bread knife murderously. It was Sellinger who changed the subject abruptly, but the girl knew that he was far from relinquishing his theory.

Sellinger went out to telephone to his house, and the girl was left alone with her father.

"Daddy," she said, "do you like Mr. Sellinger?"

He looked at her over his glasses.

"No, dear, to be candid," he said, slowly. "I think him a most unmitigated bore!"

She held out her hand solemnly and her father gripped it.

"I think you are the most wonderful father in the world," she said. "And all this time I was thinking that you loved him."

"I loathe him," said her father, frankly, "in so far as it is possible for a person of my profession to loathe anybody. But the Sellingers are a sort of tradition at Rindle, and one has to be civil to them."

"I'm going to tell you something."

She walked over and shut the door which Sellinger had left open.

"Do you know what he suggested to me this morning?"

"Who, Sellinger?"

She nodded.

"He suggested that the School Extension Funds are being stolen by Mr. Tearle."

Dr. Shaw jumped up, pink with anger.

"How dare he? It is a monstrous suggestion!" he said. "I shall tell him——"

"No, you'll tell him nothing," said Vera, hastily. "What is the use of my giving you my confidence? I am only telling you for your guidance."

Dr. Shaw sat down in his chair again.

"A disgraceful suggestion," he mumbled, "and palpably stupid. Certainly Tearle, as treasurer, has control of the money——"

"Is it cash? I mean, could you go into a room and take so many hundreds or thousands from a box?" asked the girl, and Dr. Shaw laughed.

"Of course not. The money is represented by certain securities—stocks in various industries and railways. Tearle has the handling and the care of these stocks—he is a capital man of business. But to suggest ——!" he fumed, and it needed all the girl's power of persuasion to bring him back to a condition of calm.

Mr. Sellinger went home that night deep in thought, and sat up until two o'clock in the morning writing letters to his friends. One of these friends was an editor of a newspaper closely identified with sport, and from him in a few days he learnt more particulars of the challenge which had been issued to the great Snub Reilly. The ten thousand pounds had to be deposited by the fifth of the following month, the sum being lodged in the bank in the name of three prominent sportsmen, one of whom was the writer.

Where would Tearle get his ten thousand? He was absolutely certain that Tearle was the challenger, and the news he had from the school confirmed him in his opinion. Further confirmation came one day at a committee meeting when Tearle had taken some papers from his pocket. Amongst them Sellinger saw a somewhat gaudy print. It was strangely familiar to him, but it was not until he got home that it flashed upon him that the print was a programme of the Reilly-Boyd fight! So Tearle had been a spectator after all! And he had sworn that he had not seen the fight!

The master, too, was in strict training, and once, looking from his bedroom in the dark hours of the morning—Sellinger was not a good sleeper—he saw a figure in white vest and shorts run past the lodge entrance, and recognized Barry Tearle as the runner.

The weeks that followed were for Mr. Sellinger weeks of interest and investigation. At a meeting of the Extension Committee, which gathered once a week to transact formal business, he asked for and secured a list of the securities held by the treasurer. And with this in his possession he bided his time.

THERE arrived at this period an unobtrusive individual who took lodgings in the village and appeared to have very little to do except to loaf about the school and watch the boys and the masters go in and out. He was a charming man, who made friends with the postmaster, and was on good terms with all the tradesmen before he had been in the village three days. One night Sellinger was finishing his dinner when a visitor was announced. It was the stranger who greeted his employer deferentially.

"Well, Mr. Sellinger," he said, with satisfaction, "I have a few items of information for you which will interest you."

"Have you got him?" asked Mr. Sellinger, eagerly.

"I wouldn't like to say that," said the detective, "but I rather fancy that if we haven't got him we've put him in a very tight corner."

He took a note-book from his pocket and turned the leaves.

"Yesterday afternoon Tearle sent a registered envelope to Taylor and Grime, the brokers. I got the address, because I'm a friend of the postmaster's—anyway, that was easy. I went straight up to the City by the night train and called on Taylor and Grime the next morning, and it couldn't have

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happened better for me, because there's a clerk in the office whom I know very well. As a matter of fact, I saved him from a whole lot of trouble a couple of years ago."

"What was it that Tearle sent?" asked Sellinger, holding his breath.

"Five thousand shares in the Rochester and Holbeach Railroad. One thousand shares in the Land Development Syndicate, and a thousand shares in the Newport Dock Corporation."

"Wait a moment," said Sellinger, hastily, and went to his desk. He came back with a list. "Read the names of those stocks over again," he said, and the detective complied.

"That's it!" Sellinger nodded. "All these shares are held by Tearle on behalf of the School Extension Fund!"

The detective looked at him curiously.

"Well, what are you going to do—pinch him?" he asked, and Mr. Sellinger smiled.

"No," he said, softly; "I don't think we need arrest him yet awhile."

He paced up and down the room.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," he said. "I'm having the masters up to dinner to-morrow night. It is a practice that the Sellingers have always followed since the foundation of the school—I suppose you know that Rindle School was founded by one of my ancestors?"

The detective did not know, but bowed reverently.

"Tearle lives with old Mrs. Gold in the High Street," Sellinger went on. "She's as deaf as a brick and I believe goes to bed every night at nine o'clock. His rooms are a long way from where she and the servants sleep, and, anyway, she's so deaf that she wouldn't hear you."

"What's the idea?" asked the detective.

"Whilst I have Mr. Tearle here"—Sellinger emphasized his words with a regular thrust of his finger into his hireling's waistcoat—"you will make a very careful search through Tearle's papers."

The detective nodded.

"I get you," he said. "But how am I to find my way into the house?"

"The front door is always unfastened when Tearle is out at night," said Sellinger. "He was telling the Head last week that he never carried a key, and most of the houses leave their doors open—there is no crime in Rindle."

"Except what we commit," said the detective, humorously.

"That," said Mr. Sellinger, gravely, "is an impertinence. This is not a crime. I am acting in the best interests of justice."

The Sellinger dinner, which, as Mr. Sellinger said, was a feature of Rindle School life, was a deadly dull affair to two of the guests. For the host, with commendable foresight, had so arranged the seats that Vera Shaw sat at one end of the board on his right, and Barry Tearle at the other end of the long table, on Dr. Shaw's right. This arrangement suited Mr. Sellinger admirably, because he had a proposal to make to Vera, the terms of which had taken a good day's thought. The girl, who would never have attended but for the fact that the three mistresses which Rindle boasted were present, was openly bored—a fact which Mr. Sellinger did not observe.

THEY were half-way through dinner when Sellinger exposed his grand scheme.

"Miss Vera," he said (he had compromised to that extent), "I want to make a suggestion to you and I wonder how you'll take it?"

"That depends upon the suggestion," she said, coolly.

"It may shock you," he began, cautiously, lowering his voice. "But—how would you like to see the fight?"

"See the fight?" she repeated, startled. "Do you mean the fight between——"

"Between Snub Reilly and the Great Unknown," he said, jocularly.

She thought a moment.

"I hardly think I'd like to see it at all," she said. "I do not approve of women attending such exhibitions."

"Suppose the Great Unknown were a friend of yours?" he said deliberately, and her face went pink.

"How absurd! Do you suggest——?"

"I not only suggest, but I know," he said. "You must promise not to tell Tearle, because, if my surmise is correct, he would be upset by your knowing, and maybe the thing would peter out!"

"But it's nonsense," she said, contemptuously. "How could Mr. Tearle find ten thousand——" She bit her lip.

"He may have friends," said Sellinger, suavely.

There was a silence.

"Do you think he could win—supposing he were—the Unknown?"

"Why not?" lied Sellinger. "I'm told he is a very brilliant boxer, and I'm not so sure that Snub Reilly couldn't be beaten."

He saw the girl's head turn slowly, and, as if obeying a common impulse, Barry Tearle raised his head at that moment.

"Why do you want me to go?" she asked suddenly.

But he was prepared for that; it was in framing the answer to such a question that he had spent the morning.

"Because," he said, stoutly, "I think he will win. And, what is more," it cost him a greater effort to deliver this sentiment than

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"'I rather fancy,' said the detective, 'that if we haven't got him we've put him in a very tight corner.'"

to carry out the rest of the scheme—" because I've an idea that Tearle is fond of you."

She turned quickly away and did not reply for some minutes.

" I'll go on one condition," she said, " and I think that it can be managed. I have to go to town, and my aunt has asked me to stay the night—I can easily pretend that I am going to a theatre. Who will take me ? "

" I, of course," said Mr. Sellinger, gallantly, and she nodded.

" What is the condition ? " he asked.

" That if you find you are wrong, and the —the Unknown is not Mr.—Tearle—you will take me away."

" Of course," said Mr. Sellinger, heartily. " I wouldn't dream of allowing you to see the fight unless our friend was involved. Now remember, Miss Vera, it is absolutely necessary that you should not mention this matter to Mr. Tearle. Let it be a surprise to him. I can imagine," he went on, " how delighted he would be, how nerved for the —er—combat."

" Don't let us talk about it any more," she said.

To Barry Tearle's intense disappointment she left with her father, and scarcely spoke two words to him. He was puzzled. What had she and Sellinger been talking about so earnestly, he wondered. Did they know ?—he went pale at the thought.

He walked back to his lodgings, a greatly worried young man.

The last guest had hardly departed before the detective was ushered into Sellinger's

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library, and one glance at his face revealed to that gentleman the measure of his success.

"We've got him, sir," he said, exultantly. "Here you are!" He laid a sheet of paper before the other.

"What is this?"

"I've copied it from a letter which I found on his table."

Mr. Sellinger picked up the paper and fixed his glasses. It was from a City bank, and acknowledged the receipt of ten thousand pounds which had been paid into Barry Tearle's account. But it was the second extract which filled Mr. Sellinger with joy. It was merely three lines copied from the counterfoil of Barry Tearle's cheque-book, which showed that the sum of ten thousand pounds had been made out in favour of the Fight Committee!

Mr. Sellinger rubbed his hands.

"You've done splendidly, my friend, splendidly!" he said. "Now, what shall we do?"

"You ought to have him arrested at once," said the detective, shaking his head. "Unless you take immediate steps, you'll never recover that money."

"No, no," said Sellinger.

He knew something better than that, but this he did not explain to the detective. He was going to see Tearle beaten—and somebody else was going to see him beaten, too. And when the fight was over, the comedy would develop into drama—and melodrama at that.

"I want Somebody to have a lesson," he said solemnly, "a lesson which they will never forget in their lives, and which may have a lasting beneficial effect upon their future. To the uninitiated, my act may seem a cruel one; but it is often necessary, my friend, that one should be cruel to be kind."

"But what about the money?" asked the puzzled but practical detective. "That is going to be lost."

"I don't think so," said Mr. Sellinger. "If it is, then I am happily in a position to make good to the school the amount that this man has stolen."

He might have kept his secret, he might have maintained his outward calm to the grand *dénouement*; but it was impossible that he could keep his knowledge pent up so long. The girl left for town early on the morning of the fight, and Barry, when he learnt she had gone, and had gone without seeing him, felt as though life held no further interest for him. He himself went up by the afternoon train, having secured permission from the Head. An hour before he left, Dr. Shaw sent for him, and the doctor was obviously ill at ease.

"You wanted me, sir?" said Barry, coming into the study, and the Head looked round with a start.

"Yes—er—yes, Tearle," said the doctor, uncomfortably. "Sit down, will you? I wanted to say to you—that I wish you luck."

He put out his hand.

"I'm a little worried, you know, Tearle, about it all, and it seems to me that you haven't a ghost of a chance."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"I mean, I believe you are the Unknown who has challenged this boxer, and somehow I wish you hadn't. It is not that I disapprove of boxing; and although there is certain to be a little trouble if the truth comes out that you are the challenger, we can get over that. No, it's the fear that you have risked your own private fortune——" he hesitated, "unless, of course, you persuaded your friends to assist you?"

"No, sir, it is all my own money," said Barry Tearle, steadily.

"I hope you win." Dr. Shaw shook him cheerfully by the hand. "You're a good fellow, Tearle, and—and I hope you win, and I'm sure if my—if my girl knew, and of course she doesn't dream that you are taking part in this contest, that she would echo my wishes."

Barry wrung his hand in silence and left with a little lump in his throat.

IT was a grand adventure for the girl. All day she had thought about nothing else, and alternated between hope and dread. Sometimes it was dread of the spectacle she would see; sometimes—and more often—it was the picture of Barry Tearle's failure which made her shiver. The faithful Mr. Sellinger arrived at nine o'clock in the evening. He was in his most jovial mood, as he had reason to be, for he had just parted from two Central Office detectives after putting them in possession of the vital facts.

He had arranged that the girl should arrive at the theatre where the fight was taking place in time to miss some of the minor encounters which preceded it, and it was while they were waiting in the vestibule for one such contest to finish that he was hailed by a friend and left her for a moment.

Vera was feeling self-conscious and uncomfortable. It did not bring ease to her mind that there were other ladies present. She felt ashamed and furtive and mean, and for the first time she began to have serious doubts as to what effect her presence would have upon the man whose victory she desired.

She still told herself that Sellinger was mistaken, and that the challenger was some other person than Barry, but in her heart of hearts she knew that she would see the man she loved within that cruel ring, and the thought of it set her heart thumping wildly.

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"Talk to me later, Johnson. I'm going to get my seat," she heard Sellinger say, and then he took her arm and led her down a long aisle.

The theatre was in darkness save for the brilliant lights which hung above a square, white platform.

So that was the ring! It was smaller than she had expected. She looked round at the spectators in the gloom, and thought she had never seen so many thousands of faces so close together. She was seized with a panic as to what all those thousands would say if Barry was defeated. Would they cheer? She stopped, gripping fast to Sellinger's arm. She couldn't bear that.

"I don't think I'll go in," she whispered, "I really don't think I can stand it."

"Come along," said Sellinger, soothingly, and led her down to a ring seat.

She was too near. She knew that she was too near. She would rather see this thing at such a distance as made it impossible to distinguish between one fighter and the other. But she was there now and she must stay. And then it was that Sellinger could keep his secret no longer.

There was some delay, they learned. Snub had not arrived, but had telephoned that he was on his way. But for the delay and the opportunity which it gave him, Sellinger might have maintained his silence to the end. But now he bent over the girl, and step by step traced the progress of his investigations, and she listened, chilled with horror. She could not even find the words to protest.

He might have noticed her distress and in pity have toned down his lurid recital, but he was hot with triumph, and found a joy in his brutality. And then the climax came, when the girl was clutching the arm of her chair, half fainting.

The man to whom Sellinger had spoken in the vestibule came up and said Snub had arrived. Mr. Johnson was stout, red-faced, and white-haired.

"Is the Unknown here?" demanded Sellinger with a grim smile.

"Oh, yes, he's here. I'm told he's going to——"

"He's going nowhere," almost shouted Sellinger. "I've got a couple of detectives waiting for him, my friend."

"Oh, don't, don't," said Vera, white to her lips.

"A couple of detectives?" The man looked from one to the other. "Well, I think that's rotten of you, Sellinger. The man has had his punishment. Why should he have more? You know him, then?"

"I know him very well indeed," said Sellinger. "I don't know about his punishment."

"He had two years' imprisonment for forgery in Australia. He was one of the best lightweights we've had in this country for years. I told them that they ought to have come out boldly and told the public that it is Kid Mackay who was challenging, but the men who are behind him insisted on introducing him as 'An Unknown'—an idiotic piece of tactics."

The colour was coming back to the girl's face as her eyes were fixed upon the other.

"Who is he?" she whispered.

"Kid Mackay, madam," said Sellinger's friend, and went on, "one of the best lads in the ring three years ago——"

"Then it is not Tearle?" wailed Sellinger.

Such a look of bewilderment was on his face that she could have laughed. Then with a start she remembered.

"You must take me away. You promised that if it was not——"

Her words were interrupted by a roar. A man was coming down one of the aisles in a purple dressing-gown. As he swung up between the ropes, his broad, good-humoured face all smiles, one half the audience recognized the Unknown as the erstwhile champion, and understood the reticence that his backers had shown.

But now a greater roar shook the building. Another figure moved amidst his seconds, and leaping lightly up to the ring, dodged through the ropes. From every part of the vast hall came a shout!

"Snub—Snub Reilly!"

"Snub Reilly!" Mr. Sellinger's voice was hollow, and then Snub Reilly turned, and the girl half rose from her seat.

The man whose face was distorted with his characteristic grimace was staring down at her, then slowly the wrinkles and puckerings smoothed out and the mouth went straight and she looked up into the startled eyes of Barry Tearle.

Mr. Sellinger sat, stricken dumb, his mouth agape. As for the girl, she looked on as if in a trance. She saw the preliminaries, watched the opening of the first round, her eyes never leaving the lithe figure that leaped and lunged. She could hear the thud of the gloves as they struck, but whose gloves they were and who was struck she could not tell. It was at the beginning of the second round that the "Unknown" forced the fighting, in spite of the injunctions and prayers of his seconds to remain strictly on the defensive for the first eight rounds. Right and left flashed Snub's terrible fists. The Unknown staggered. A second blow to the jaw landed, timed to the fraction of a second.

The fight was over. It was over, too, for Vera Shaw, and Barry Tearle leapt the ropes in time to catch her as she fainted.

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IT was in the Head's study the next morning that Barry Tearle, unmarked by his exertions the night before, told his story.

"My father was a boxer," he said. "He used to travel the country fairs, and every penny he made he put into my education. He did something more—he taught me the game, as no man knew it better than he. He died whilst I was at the University, and it looked as though my education was going to stop short. I loved my studies and I loved the life I had planned for myself. But I wanted money. I had no friends or influence. One morning at breakfast I saw in the sporting press a challenge issued on behalf of a man whom I had seen fight and whom I thought I could beat. I pawned everything I had to cover his modest stake, and, adopting the name of Snub Reilly—Reilly is my second name—I fought him and won. As I became better known I was terrified lest I should be recognized. It was then that I adopted what the papers call my 'fighting face.' It was difficult to keep it up, but my fights have been so short——"

The doctor cleared his throat.

"Vera has told me something of Mr. Sellinger's accusation. You sold some bonds?"

Barry nodded.

"Right and left flashed Snub's terrible fists. The Unknown staggered. A second blow to the jaw landed. The fight was over."

"They were my own bonds," he said. "I had to raise ten thousand pounds to cover this challenge. They were bonds similar to those which we held for the Extension Fund."

"Naturally," Dr. Shaw nodded, "you would buy the best stock, both for the school and for yourself."

He was looking down at his blotting-pad thoughtfully.

"You have fought your last fight?" he said.

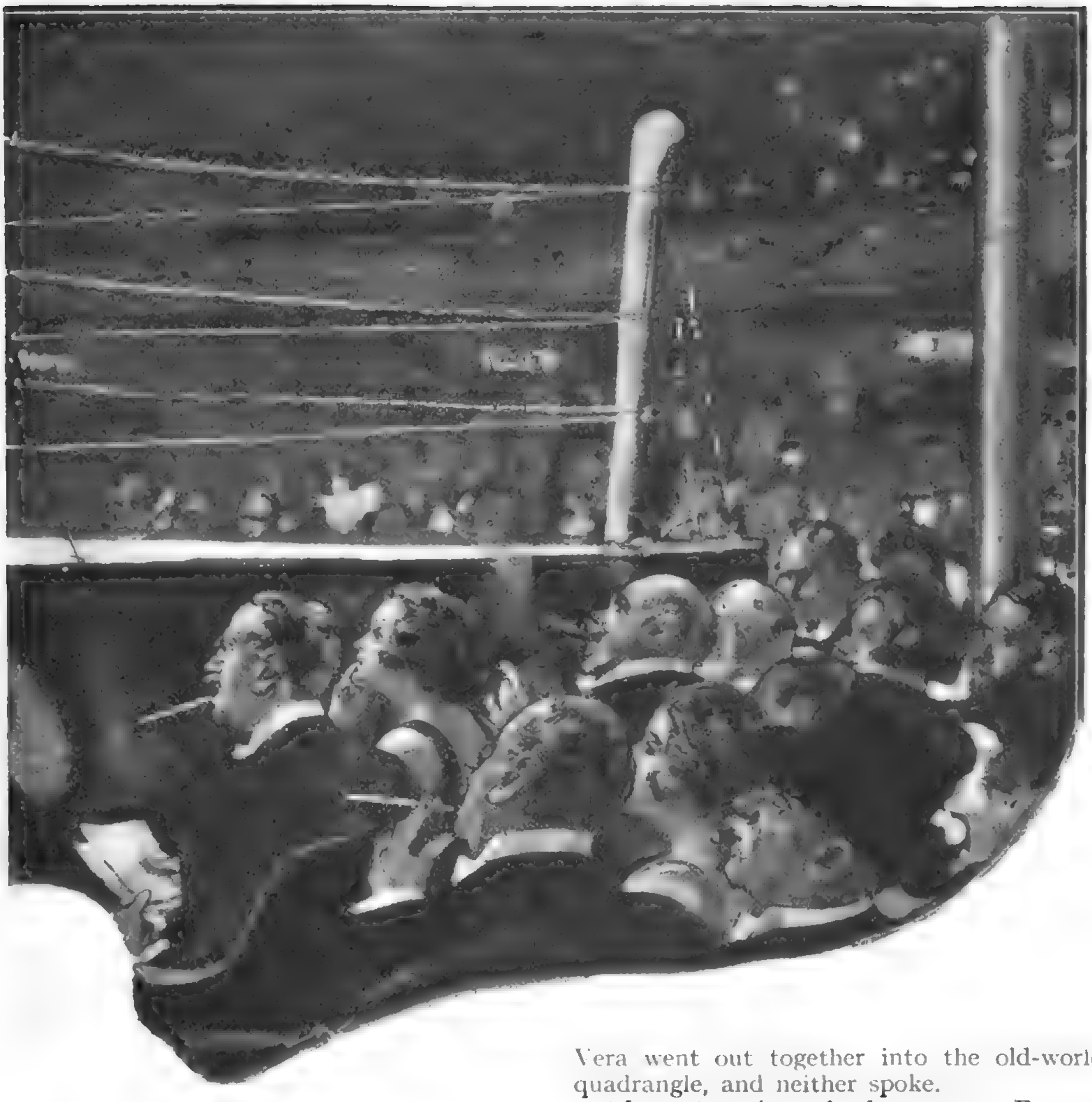
Barry nodded.

"Yes, sir. From now on, Snub Reilly disappears. I have made a considerable sum, quite sufficient for my needs."

"Nobody at the school knows you are—Snub Reilly?"

"Except Mr. Sellinger," said Vera.

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"I do not think Mr. Sellinger will be anxious to talk about the part he has played in a business which is only discreditable in so far as he has been concerned," said Dr. Shaw.

For the second time in twenty-four hours he put out his hand.

"I rather think," he said, "I should like to have seen that fight. Wouldn't you, Vera?"

The girl shuddered and shook her head.

"Of course not, of course not. How could I ask such a thing?" said the doctor, tenderly, and he dropped his hand on her shoulder. "You couldn't imagine my little girl in that sort of an atmosphere, could you, Tearle?"

Mr. Barry Tearle shook his head. He and Vera went out together into the old-world quadrangle, and neither spoke.

"I must go into the house now, Barry," she said. "You—you weren't very much hurt last night?" she added, anxiously. "Oh, my dear, I was so happy when you won." She laid her hands impulsively on his breast. "And I've quite forgiven your little lie!"

"My little lie?" He was astonished.

"You said you had not seen the fight that night."

He smiled.

"I didn't see it," he insisted. "I felt it—but I didn't see it."

Since the class-rooms overlook the quadrangle, what followed would have been witnessed by the whole of the Fifth Classical form but for the tact of the head prefect of School House, who happened to be standing by the window and closed it with a bang.

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VARIATIONS on a personal theme by LANDON RONALD

These selections from Mr. Landon Ronald's Reminiscences are published by arrangement with Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton, who are shortly issuing "Variations on a Personal Theme" in volume form.

VARIATION I.

Mainly Autobiographical.

I HAVE constantly been asked to write my Reminiscences, but have always refused—chiefly because I keep no diary and I have a very bad memory for dates. No one, however, who has been before the public since he was sixteen and has met every kind of person, interesting or otherwise, can fail to have had some amusing experiences and a few anecdotes to tell.

I can at least lay claim to having had a sense of humour all my life. Again and again have I been saved from utter boredom at stodgy committee meetings, at dull entertainments, or on long railway journeys by seeing the funny side of things. I probably inherited this from my father, who was a great *raconteur*, loved a joke, and had a splendid sense of the ridiculous. As a boy at home I was considered the "funny man," and can boast at the age of ten of even amusing my family—and, as we all know, the family is *not* given to laughing at or encouraging home-grown products as a rule. Corney Grain and George Grossmith were my two idols, and I was filled with an ambition to give an entertainment at the pianoforte similar to theirs. This ambition has never been realized. From the age of four or five I gave such obvious signs of being exceptionally musical that never for one instant was the possibility entertained of my ever becoming anything but a musician. My dear mother not only gave me my first pianoforte lessons, but in every way guided and helped me in my studies, selecting my masters and even standing over me with infinite patience to see that I performed my allotted tasks at home. Oddly enough, I was a lazy boy, and would always shirk work if I could. This is all the more curious when it is remembered that from the age of seventeen I have been an indefatigable worker, and that to-day I never give up unless ill-health compels me to do so. Everything in music came remarkably easy to me, especially writing songs. I was trained, however, to become a pianist and violinist, but heartily disliked having to practise either instrument. At the age of fourteen I wanted to give up both in order to become a conductor, a composer, and a musical critic, and wrote this fact to my mother. It may seem odd to have written it instead of saying it to her, but Dr. Johnson never said a truer saying than "A letter cannot blush." This was just my case; I was too shy to tell her, so I wrote a note and crept upstairs and placed it carefully on her dressing-table. She met me with a very definite refusal, partly because she quite rightly deemed my desire as a mere excuse to escape the necessary work that all pianists and violinists have to do. To those two instruments I was therefore kept, and after some six months' private tuition under Lady Thompson for composition, Franklin Taylor for pianoforte, and Henry Holmes for violin, I was entered as a student at the Royal College of Music. I



Mr. Landon Ronald.

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should like to add here in parentheses that Lady Thompson was the wife of the celebrated surgeon, Sir Henry Thompson, and was in her early days known as Miss Kate Loder, a brilliant pianist. In her old age she was paralyzed, and couldn't move hand or foot. She was a magnificent musician and the kindest of friends, and her influence on my early musical days was deeply marked.

On one of my journeys to the Royal College of Music on the Underground Railway an absurd incident occurred which I still remember with great clearness. I was standing on Praed Street Station platform,



"When Moul asked what my terms would be, with a beating heart but without a moment's hesitation I replied: 'Ten pounds!'"

when I noticed an old man in a huge fur coat smoking a pipe. Some ashes of the pipe fell on his coat and it began to burn. I ran up to him and informed him of the circumstance. He seemed greatly perturbed, and thanked me in the most effusive terms, and said that he would never forget my action. He would not leave me, and would not stop thanking me, and travelled with me as far as South Kensington Station, asking me all about myself. He took my name and address and said that I should hear from him, as he wished me to have a little souvenir of an action he would never forget. I heard nothing for some days, though, with child-like curiosity, I anxiously awaited the knock of the postman! One day a huge parcel arrived addressed to me. In the greatest excitement I opened it, and it turned out to be at least a couple of hundred religious tracts of all kinds, with a very cheap edition of the Bible and some Ancient and Modern Hymns. This was the old man's way of showing his gratitude.

I LEFT the Royal College of Music at the age of sixteen and a half, being a very good pianist, a fair violinist, a composer of some pretty tunes, and equipped with a thorough knowledge of the orchestra and orchestral music through having played first violin in the college orchestra for a considerable period. Among those who were fellow-students of mine and who have since made names for themselves were Robert Hichens, Hamish MacCunn, Howard Talbot, W. H. Squire, and those excellent accompanists Messrs. F. A. Sewell and Liddle, besides many others who hold prominent positions on the concert platform and as well-known teachers.

My first engagement followed soon after I left the college and came about thus: I received a letter from a fellow-student saying that a pianist was wanted to play the difficult pianoforte part of "L'Enfant Prodigue," a musical play without words which had just been produced with enormous

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success at the Prince of Wales Theatre. I was asked to go and see Mr. Alfred Moul, who was then a theatrical agent and later became chairman of the Alhambra Theatre. I did so, and my interview with him was decidedly amusing, and both he and I often laughed about it in after years. I was an independent, somewhat self-satisfied youth, and he was the practical, very busy man, with little time and few words to waste. He informed me very curtly that a trial of pianists was being held the next day at the theatre, and that if I cared to attend I could do so. I was living at home at this time and my father allowed me a few shillings a week pocket-money, and I didn't feel that there was any urgent necessity for me to earn anything. But I went to the theatre more out of a desire to prove to Mr. Moul that I was considerably better than he imagined than for any other reason. The composer, André Wormser, was there; Charles Lauri, who was running the piece, and Mr. Moul, and behind them there were about twenty pianists all waiting to be heard. My turn came, and I played a very showy rhapsody by Liszt. My success was very marked, and I was at once asked to play from sight some of "L'Enfant Prodigue," which I did with the greatest ease. Charles Lauri was so carried away with enthusiasm that in a loud whisper I heard him tell Alfred Moul not to let me go out of the theatre and to settle with me there and then. I had no idea of my value, and scarcely realized what a weekly salary meant. Whatever they offered to pay me I knew I should have for pocket-money, and before I overheard Lauri's remark I began to see visions of two golden sovereigns per week to spend as I liked. When Moul, therefore, took me aside and told me that he was instructed to offer me the job and asked me what my terms would be, with a beating heart but without a moment's hesitation I replied, "Ten pounds"! What possessed me to do so, or how I had the effrontery, still remains a mystery. But when my suggestion was immediately agreed to and I was not kicked out of the theatre, as I had feared I should be, I was scarcely able to find my voice to say "Thank you." I played "L'Enfant Prodigue" over three hundred times, and went on tour with it through England and Scotland.

Playing the piano in "L'Enfant Prodigue" proved to be my first and practically my last appearance as a pianist. It is true that I have played in public on a few rare occasions since, but my dropping the idea of ever making a career as a pianist dates from the last performance of "L'Enfant Prodigue" many, many years ago. I made up my mind to become a conductor, although my youthful appearance was a great drawback, as I found that managers were shy of trusting such a boyish-looking individual, and that orchestral men had little or no respect for me. I eventually succeeded, however, in obtaining an engagement to conduct comic opera on tour. This I did for a year or two, obtaining invaluable experience, though the remuneration was small and the life an unpleasant one. Naturally, I could not afford to live at hotels, and very often I would arrive on a Sunday fairly late in the evening, leaving my baggage at the station and having to hunt for rooms in a large town without knowing my way about. Having obtained them, I often experienced the most horrible cooking, and more often suffered from dirt. I remember passing a most terrible night in one of the big northern cities through finding the bed crowded with horrible insects. On upbraiding the landlady about it the next morning, it was explained to me that an actress had been sleeping in the bed the previous week, and had as her companions two pet dogs. Incidents such as these were innumerable, although I am led to understand that present-day conditions have vastly improved, and that the life of an actor or actress on tour can be made extremely comfortable without going to expensive hotels.

Signor Boito, the famous composer of "Mefistofele" and the man who arranged the libretti of "Otello" and "Falstaff" for Verdi, was over in this country, and I was invited to a party given by Mr. Albert Visetti to meet him. It was on this occasion that I met and made friends with the well-known conductor of Covent Garden Opera, Signor Luigi Mancinelli. Chiefly through the influence of Signor Mancinelli and my father, I was engaged by the famous impresario of that time, Sir Augustus Harris, who appointed me to take up the duties of coach and *répétiteur* at Covent Garden Theatre. Although for the next few years I was destined to have some of the most heart-breaking experiences, some of the most awful snubs, and some of the hardest work that has ever fallen to the lot of a young man of nineteen, I still look back on those days as being the most interesting, the most valuable, and the most influential of my life. I had to be at the theatre every morning at ten o'clock, and seldom got away before midnight, while regular meals were literally an unknown quantity. During the Opera season I believe I did everything except sweeping the floors and keeping the place clean. I was at everybody's call, and all the work that other coaches didn't want or care to do was put on my shoulders. By the time six months had passed I really felt that I had mastered my job. I was sent on a provincial operatic tour which Harris had

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arranged, the company including the Sisters Ravogli (who had created such a *furore* in "Orfeo"), Lucile Hill, David Bispham, Joseph O'Mara, and about twenty other artistes of all nationalities, a large chorus, and orchestra. The tour was a financial failure, but it gave me fresh and valuable experience. It seems extraordinary, considering the enormous success that opera is to-day in the provinces, that this tour with such fine artistes and a really first-class chorus and orchestra should have been a failure. At so-called "musical Manchester," I can remember that the night we gave the first production of the "Meistersinger," that Albert Chevalier was giving one of his recitals next door at the Free Trade Hall. The "Meistersinger" scarcely drew five hundred people; Chevalier was absolutely packed out, and hundreds refused at the doors.

My second season at Covent Garden proved in every way eventful. I was then beginning to be recognized by certain of the great singers as a capable coach, and Mr. Arthur Collins (the present Managing Director of Drury Lane Theatre), Augustus Harris's stage manager, was extremely kind and took the warmest interest in me. He used to allow me privileges which he would grant to but few, one being that I was permitted to stand in the "prompt corner" to watch the performance when I had nothing else to do, so that I could note how all the great singers phrased and interpreted their different *rôles*. This was the period when the De Reszkes were at the height of their fame, and the list of artistes engaged included almost all the greatest singers of the world. I have a list before me now as I write, and find that amongst those who were announced to appear during this season were Mesdames Melba, Albani, Calvé, Nordica, Ternina, Emma Eames, Ella Russell, Marie Brema, and Schumann-Heink; and Messieurs Jean and Edouard de Reszke, Tamagno, Van Dyck, Alvarez, Maurel, Van Rooy, Plançon, Renaud, Ancona, and De Lucia. I remember that the cast that usually appeared in the production of "Romeo and Juliet" included Melba, Jean de Reszke, Edouard de Reszke, and Plançon, and I can recall a unique performance of "Carmen" with Jean de Reszke as Don José, Calvé as Carmen,



"The tenor repeated the mistake and nearly put out the entire orchestra. Mancinelli shouted to him in a raucous voice: 'You are very beast!'"

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Melba as Micaela, and Ancona as Escamillo. Augustus Harris certainly did things in the grand manner. He gave the British public casts which undoubtedly have never been equalled since; casts which, alas! would be financially prohibitive nowadays, even supposing such supreme artistes were available. Singers are proverbially the most difficult people to deal with, but Augustus Harris had the special gift of getting them to do anything and everything he wanted. He commanded their affection as well as their respect. I worked under him for close on eight years, and still have in my possession my first three years' contract at a salary of four pounds, five pounds, and six pounds per week. His early and unexpected death was a great loss to the operatic world, and left a void I do not consider has ever been filled.

On one occasion at Drury Lane Harris had persuaded Mancinelli to direct a few operas during the English Opera season. He was rehearsing "Lohengrin" with a certain English tenor on the morning of the performance, and he could not be persuaded to sing one particular phrase in time. Mancinelli, after much swearing in Italian and French (he spoke no English), eventually got the unfortunate singer to do it correctly, and made him promise to practise it well before the night's performance. Sure enough, at the performance the tenor repeated the mistake he had made in the morning, and nearly put out the entire orchestra. Mancinelli, getting very red in the face, shouted to him in a raucous voice, "You are very beast!"—a literal translation of "Vous êtes très bête."

His anger was very violent and short-lived, and he had a curiously penetrating, good-natured laugh, amazingly like the bleat of a nanny-goat. I remember an incident that occurred when the Sisters Ravogli were cramming the house with their performance of Glück's "Orfeo." Harris had the notion that it would be very realistic to have some real nanny-goats on the stage in the scene depicting the Elysian Plains. I was sitting in the stalls with Harris, just behind Bevignani, who was conducting, and we were eagerly awaiting the effect the stage picture would create. Our expectations were surpassed! In the middle of Sofia Ravogli's solo the nanny-goats began to bleat all over the stage; the audience tittered and laughed, and the dramatic effect was ruined. Harris told me to rush round to Arthur Collins and get the nanny-goats off the stage as quickly as ever he could. After much signing and pantomime to the fat Italian choristers, these wretched animals were eventually pulled off amidst a roar of laughter from the audience. I went back to my seat to find Harris furious. However, things settled down again, but to our horror we heard the bleat in the distance about a quarter of an hour after we had believed the episode to be closed. Harris got up and went on the stage himself, using unparliamentary language to Arthur Collins and asking why the nanny-goats had not been taken entirely out of the building. Collins assured him that they were out of the building, when another bleat was heard. Harris shouted furiously, "Why, I can hear one of those wretched beasts now!" "Oh, no," said Arthur Collins; "that's Signor Mancinelli laughing at some story which Calvé has just told him." It was so.

Mancinelli could only speak a few sentences of broken English, but he was only one of many members of the company who made the most humorous mistakes. I was present when the immortal sentence of Arditi was shouted by him to a second violin who had been arguing with him: "Don't shpoke. If you no like, you went!"

TO digress from this period for a moment, one of the funniest experiences in connection with foreign pronunciation of the English language I had in comparatively recent years was when I was vainly endeavouring to teach Victor Maurel, the famous French baritone, a song of mine entitled "Away on the Hill there Runs a Stream." His great difficulty was to aspirate the h in "hill," and although I studied it with him for hours he *would* sing "ill" instead of "hill." Eventually, two days before the concert, we got it fairly right, although of course he took the usual exaggerated deep breath before the aspirate. The day of the concert arrived, and I was accompanying him. Imagine my agony of mind when, as I was playing the introduction of my song, I saw beads of perspiration on Maurel's forehead as he began to sing. I knew that something terrible was going to occur, and it did! He took a deep breath, looked round appealingly to me, and at the top of his voice shouted for all he was worth: "Haway hon the eel!"

In 1895 Mme. Melba engaged me as conductor of her American tour, notwithstanding that up to that time I had chiefly acted for her as accompanist. We went right through the States and part of Canada carrying an excellent orchestra, and in addition to a concert programme performed scenes from operas in the second half. I was away about six months in all, and on my return to London received a lesson which I shall ever remember. I was then twenty-two, so I shall be forgiven if I say that perhaps I returned with what I may describe as a "swollen head." I had certainly hoped that the success I had achieved in America

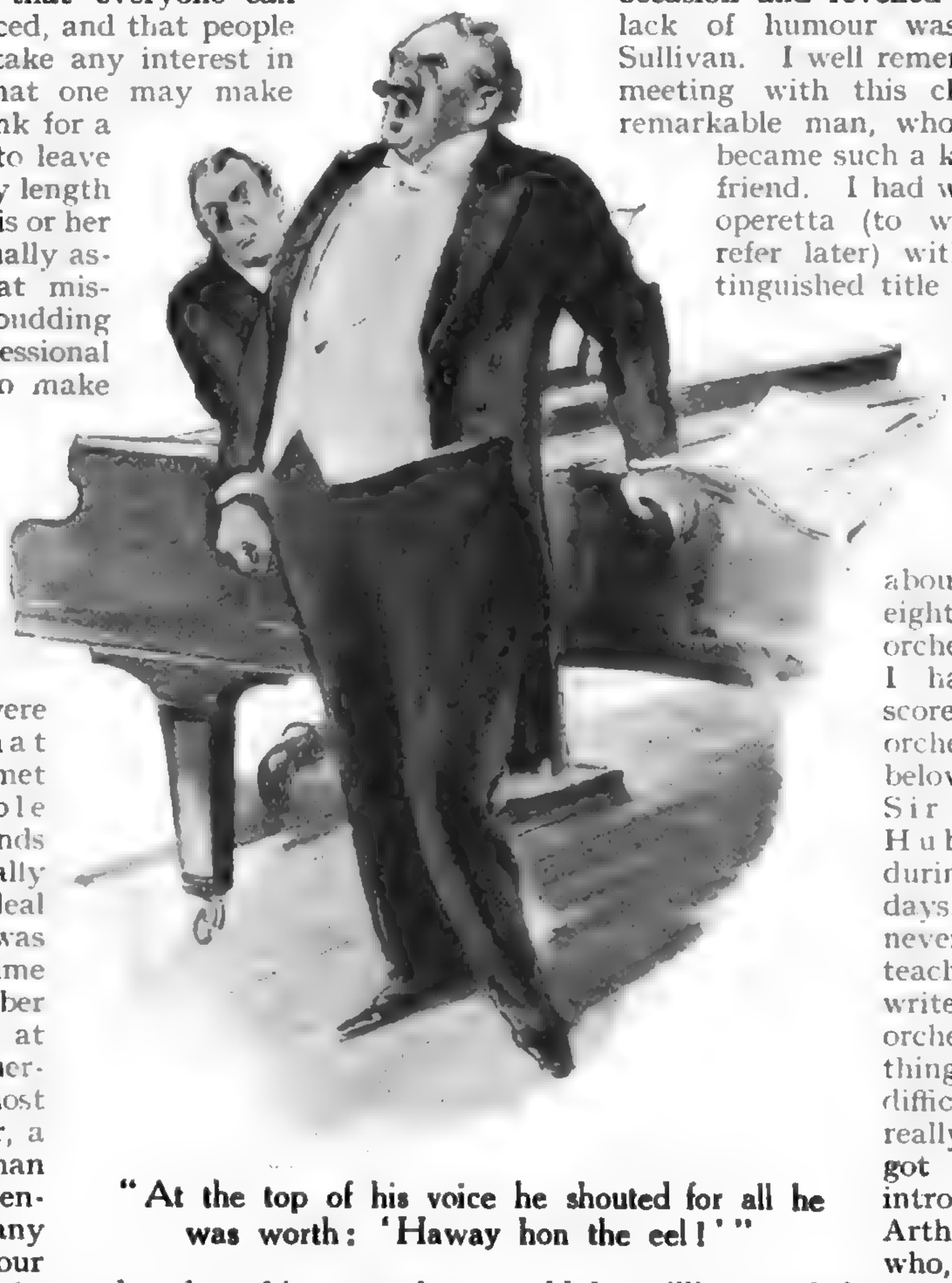
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with the world's greatest singer would be known over here. I was soon to be disillusioned. The first man who met me said, sympathetically, " My dear Ronald, how nice to see you again. Have you been ill? I haven't seen you for months!" Another acquaintance was curious to know " *what I had been doing in America,*" and on my entering Drury Lane Theatre I found that another coach and conductor had been engaged for the English Opera season in my absence. All this helped to teach me that nobody is really missed, that everyone can easily be replaced, and that people really do not take any interest in any success that one may make abroad. I think for a young artiste to leave London for any length of time until his or her position is actually assured is a great mistake. The budding young professional may do well to make a note of this.

The following year my accompanying led me to undertake the preparation of most of the great musical parties that were given at that period, and I met many valuable and useful friends and incidentally earned a good deal of money. It was about this time that I remember being present at a large dinner-party; my host was a bachelor, a very famous man in society, who entirely lacked any sense of humour whatever. I always loved making people laugh—I do still to-day—and I told a little story on that occasion at my end of the table which is a " chestnut " to-day, but in those days and on this particular occasion caused much laughter. It was as follows:—

A man was brought up for stealing. The magistrate, addressing the prisoner, said, " What's your name?" The prisoner replied by making a noise somewhat resembling a sneeze, or the escape of gas. " *What's* your name?" repeated the magistrate in firmer tones. The answer was the same, only more so. " Constable," said the magistrate, very much perturbed, " what is this man *charged* with?" " I don't know, yer worship," was the reply, " but I should think soda-water!" My host, who had listened with great attention, never smiled and seemed amazed at his guests' laughter. After an awkward silence of about three minutes, he turned to me and said, " Now tell me, Ronald, what *was* that man's name, really?"

One of those who were present on the occasion and revelled in my host's lack of humour was Sir Arthur Sullivan. I well remember my first meeting with this charming and remarkable man, who later in life became such a kind and good friend. I had written a little operetta (to which I shall refer later) with the undistinguished title of " Did you Ring?" and it had been accepted for productionat the Prince of Wales Theatre. I was to have about sixteen or eighteen in the orchestra. Now, I had learnt to score for a large orchestra from my beloved master, Sir (then Dr.) Hubert Parry, during my student days. But he had never thought of teaching me to write for a small orchestra — something much more difficult to do really well. So I got a letter of introduction to Sir Arthur Sullivan, who, I was told, would be willing to help me. I kept my appointment with the great little man in fear and trembling. He received me delightfully, placed me at my ease at once, and almost made me feel that I was a brother colleague of his! I explained my mission, but he told me in the kindest manner that he never taught, and advised me to go to a friend of his, an admirable musician named Ernest Ford, which eventually I did. As I was taking leave of Sullivan he asked me if I was going to the next Richter concert. I



" At the top of his voice he shouted for all he was worth: 'Haway hon the eel!'"

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replied in the affirmative. "Well," he said, "the wonderful Mozart G minor Symphony is being performed. Go and buy a pianoforte copy of it; take it with you to the concert, listen well to the orchestration, and next morning score it yourself from the pianoforte copy. Then go and buy Mozart's full score, compare it with yours, and you'll learn much!" It was the most wonderful advice. By the time I had finished comparing Mozart's scoring with mine I felt I would never again attempt to write for orchestra, small or big! This advice stands as good for to-day as it did many years ago, and I hope if these lines meet the eyes of any music students that they may benefit as much from Sir Arthur's advice as I did.

The very last time I saw Sullivan was at a big private concert given by the late Lord Astor in Carlton House Terrace, when the great composer was nearing his end. He came to me and insisted, rather petulantly, that I should call myself Sir Arthur Sullivan and he was to call himself Landon Ronald for the rest of the evening. It was a joke that placed me in an awkward position, and which fell very flat. I pointed out the incongruity of it all to him, and he left me quite in a pet, affirming that I had no sense of humour and would never enter into a joke. Alas! I never saw him again.

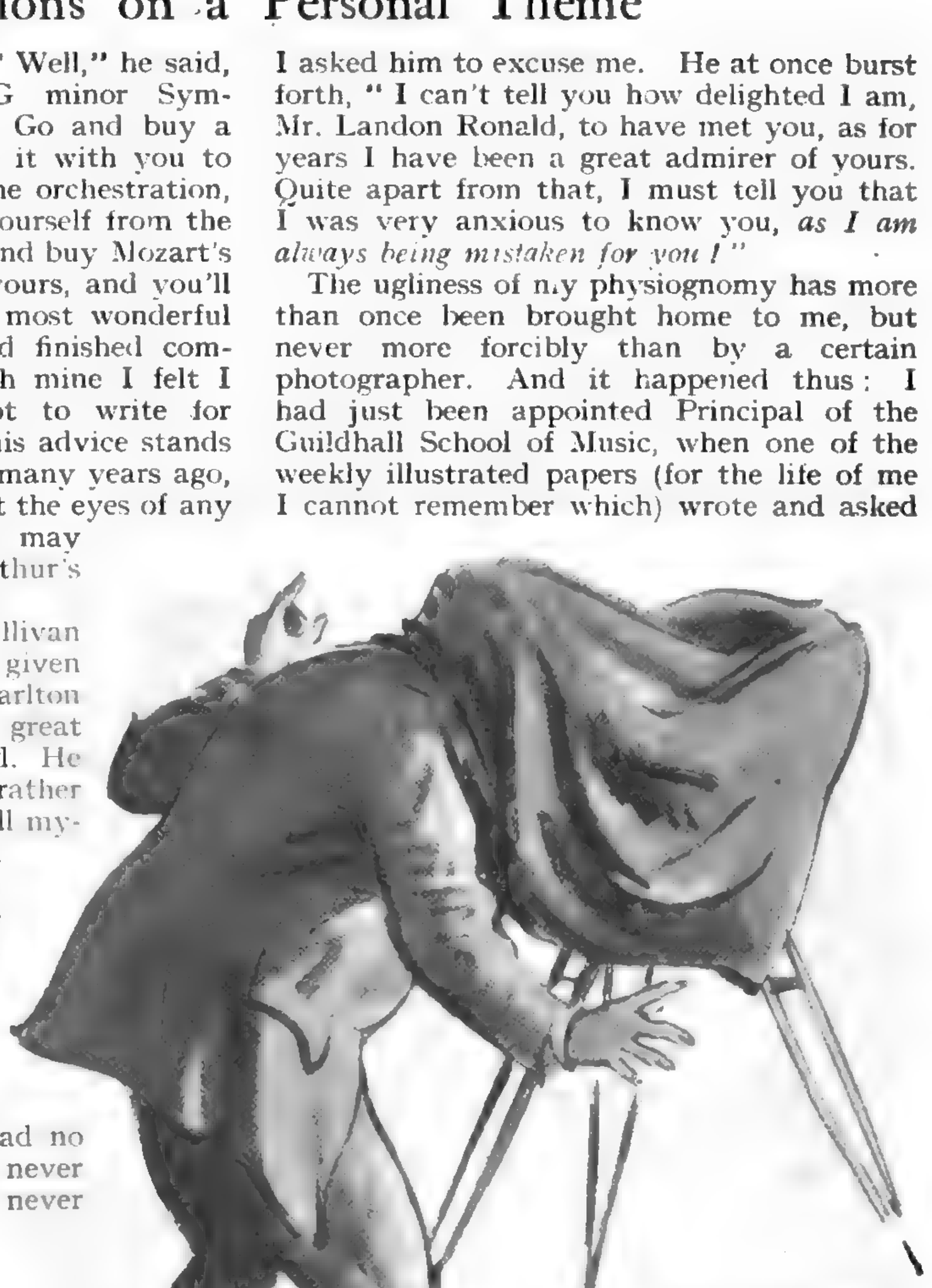
VARIATION II.

Stories Against Myself.

I LOVE telling stories against myself. Here are one or two for which I can vouch.

I sauntered into my club one hot afternoon and looked into the reading-room, which was empty save for two men—one a famous pianist, the other a stranger and one of the very ugliest men I have ever set eyes upon in my life. I scanned the columns of a few newspapers, and was about to leave the room, when my pianist friend called me, saying, "Let me introduce you to my friend, Mr. X——." We shook hands and I thought him uglier than ever. He immediately began talking about my work at the Albert Hall and the Guildhall School of Music in the kindest and most flattering terms, and indeed there seemed little of my professional life of which he was ignorant. After about ten minutes of this I got rather "fed up," and, pleading that I had to go and telephone, I asked him to excuse me. He at once burst forth, "I can't tell you how delighted I am, Mr. Landon Ronald, to have met you, as for years I have been a great admirer of yours. Quite apart from that, I must tell you that I was very anxious to know you, *as I am always being mistaken for you!*"

The ugliness of my physiognomy has more than once been brought home to me, but never more forcibly than by a certain photographer. And it happened thus: I had just been appointed Principal of the Guildhall School of Music, when one of the weekly illustrated papers (for the life of me I cannot remember which) wrote and asked me if they might include me in a series of "Celebrities at Home" interviews they were publishing, and that if I consented they would send one of their own photographers to take portraits of myself, my study, etc. I agreed to all this and the appointment was duly made. Punctual to the minute, a little red-nosed man arrived on a very hot June day, dressed in a long black coat, white waistcoat, green tie, brown boots, and a sailor's hat! He got to work quickly, taking portraits of various nooks and corners of my house, with obvious satisfaction to himself; fixed his camera in my study, and informed



"Back he went to his camera, placing a black cloth on his head, when I heard a plaintive little voice ejaculate: 'Oh, my Gawd, no! That's worse than ever!'"

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me that now it was *my* turn to be taken. The poor little chap posed me in every imaginable position, made me sit down and stand up, placed me against the mantelpiece, asked me to smile, to fold my arms, to look serious, and after each attempt sighed and murmured, "Oh, dear; oh, dear." I began to feel quite unhappy and uncomfortable myself, when I saw a light come into his eyes and, with a triumphant smile and a Cockney accent, he said, "I've got it! Go to your desk, Mr. Ronald, sit down with some manuscript paper before you, and look as if you were a-trying to make up one of those pretty little songs of yours." I was out to get this trying interview over, so promptly did what he told me, with the



result that my profile was turned to him. Back he went to his camera, placing a black cloth on his head, when I heard a plaintive little voice ejaculate: "Oh, my Gawd, no! That's worse than ever!" The interview ended by my giving him a portrait I had by me and begging him not to trouble any more.

Many of the musical public of to-day, who only know me either as conductor or composer, or as being the head of a school of music, may be surprised to hear that twenty years ago I held a prominent place among the accompanists of that period. From 1904 to about 1910 I was the sole accompanist of Dame Nellie Melba, and I believe I am right in saying that she deeply regretted the fact that my other work made it impossible for me to continue playing for her. About two years had elapsed since I had accompanied her, when one day I had a telegram from her asking me to call. She informed me that she was going on a tour with her impresario (Mr. Percy Harrison) through the English provinces and that her accompanist from Paris was unable to come, and wanted to know if I could possibly go along with her, just to play her numbers and do nothing else. As a bait, she informed me she was singing a small group of my songs in the middle of the programme. She was far too dear and precious a friend for me to fail her when she really wanted me, so I agreed at once.

Scenes of triumph were repeated in every town we visited—with one notable exception. Wild horses would not extract the name from me, but I may just add that the town in question is better known as a great industrial centre than for its cultivation of music. Not that the people didn't crowd to hear Melba. They literally packed the hall, and extra seats had to be placed on the platform, right next to the grand piano; but the great enthusiasm was lacking, and Melba knew it. She bowed very coldly and was received very coldly. Her first item was "A fors è lui," from "Traviata." The applause was dignified and restrained; so was Melba's acknowledgment. After expressing her opinion of the audience to me in no uncertain terms, I thought I would comfort her by saying, "Wait until you sing *my* group of songs! You won't get a hand." My prophecy, alas! was fulfilled, and I left the platform feeling like the criminal does when he leaves the dock after the jury have found him "Guilty." Her last item was the Mad Scene from "Lucia" with flute *obbligato*, and I think I may safely say that no one ever sang this aria in any way approaching Dame Nellie Melba. The result was electrical, even on this stodgy audience. They shouted and stamped and roared and cheered, until, after bowing five or six times, she consented to sing Tosti's "Good-bye." Now, I must just explain here that I had played this song for years by memory for her, just as I played my own songs without music, so that I didn't dream of taking the music with me on this particular occasion. I sat down at the pianoforte and was just about to begin, when a woman sitting very near me on my left said, in a very raucous voice, "Eh, lad, it's a shame! We're going to 'ave more of *'is* stuff!"

WHEN I succeeded Mr. Mylanarski as conductor of the Scottish Orchestra in November, 1919, I made my *début* in Glasgow with many misgivings and fears. I had only paid flying visits there, and had heard that the Glasgow people were slow in making new friends. However, everything went off with great *éclat*, and I felt it wouldn't be very long before the audience and myself would be on the friendliest terms. That has certainly

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turned out to be the case, as is proved by the fact that on the last night of the season the entire audience sang "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow" and "Auld Lang Syne." This was the first experience I had ever had of the kind, and it touched me deeply. Returning, however, to that first evening, I had shaken hands and said good-bye to the committee, and was just about to enter my taxi, when two little girls, with very red hair, asked me to sign their autograph book. "I shall have to do it in pencil," said I. "That's all right," said the elder, with an accent you could cut with a knife. The book being duly signed, I returned it to the girl, who, after looking at it, asked me in a very disappointed tone, "Aren't you Mr. Mylanarski?" "No," said I, with my most amiable smile; "my name is Landon Ronald." The girl turned to her companion and said, "Have you got the india-rubber, Jean?"

ANOTHER story which I am very fond of telling against myself, and which I have recounted so often in public that I fear it will be a "chestnut" to many, occurred to me soon after I was appointed Principal of the Guildhall School of Music. All the City Companies vied with one another to entertain me, a kindness which I deeply appreciated. I received an invitation to attend a banquet given in honour of the Fine Arts—I believe by the Drapers' Company. Sir Alexander Mackenzie (the Principal of the Royal Academy of Music) had promised to propose the toast of "Music," and I was to be in that blissful position of not having to speak at all. On my arrival at their superb hall, I was met on the staircase by the clerk, who informed me that Sir Alexander Mackenzie had sent a wire saying that illness prevented his attendance, and that it devolved on me, as an official of the City, to propose the toast in his stead. This came as a great shock, and incidentally spoilt my appetite. However, with the help of some admirable food and some good Scotch whisky, I was beginning to feel "fit for the fight" as the time drew near for me to speak. I had written down certain notes on the back of the menu, and was just taking my final "wee drappie," when the Master of the Ceremonies, who was an enormous man with a long black beard, came and touched me on the shoulder and said, in a fairly audible whisper, "Mr. Landon Ronald, will you make your speech now, *or let the guests enjoy themselves a little longer?*"

Next month's "Variations" will be: "The First Time I Conducted"—"On Accompanying at Windsor and Balmoral."

COMING ATTRACTIONS.

Next month's number of "The Strand Magazine" will contain "The Problem of Thor Bridge," a splendid new SHERLOCK HOLMES STORY by A. CONAN DOYLE.

Other important features in early numbers will be:—

1. "The Lift," by A. CONAN DOYLE. Described as "a real scalp-raiser."
2. "Taking Pains," by W. W. JACOBS.
3. ARNOLD BENNETT'S new series of articles, entitled "How to Make the Best of Life."

The "JEEVES" series by P. G. WODEHOUSE will be resumed next month with a specially amusing story.

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THE features of Mr. Hartley Pope, sitting back in the corner of a first-class compartment on the 5.47 p.m. down to Woldington, bore an expression of dignified reserve. From 10 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. each day — with perhaps a slight relaxation during the luncheon interval — that expression rarely changed. Many years before he had adopted it, together with a morning coat, a collar with wide flaps, a silk hat, and a brown leather dispatch-case, as, so to say, part of the livery in which he conducted his business.

As the result of long usage, it had tended to encroach on his private existence, and although his sister, who kept house for him, had never been deceived, many other of his associates were inclined to the view that Mr. Pope was a rather unapproachable individual.

It was not the truth. Mr. Pope was as human as the most human of us. His favourite drink was bitter, his favourite newspaper was a picture one—though he read the *Financial Times*—his favourite form of theatrical entertainment, the revue. He had an eye for a pretty woman and a great relish for anecdotes—that story about the barmaid and the jockey (you remember ?) was part of his social stock-in-trade.

In the corner obliquely opposite him sat a girl. She was clothed in a neat tailor-made of striped navy cashmere, a small hat of brown velvet, brown shoes, and, over shapely ankles and equally shapely calves, brown silk stockings. Without appearing to do so, Mr. Pope had observed her ankles and her silk stockings, and very cursorily glanced at her face.

It was while he was studying her features that she looked up and caught his eye. Mr. Pope blushed. They had travelled together on that train each evening for six months, but had never spoken. But to cover up his confusion Mr. Pope observed pleasantly across the carriage :—

" A nice evening ! "

The girl received his overture in chilly silence, and Mr. Pope blushed more deeply still. He was hurt and humiliated. A young officer next to him giggled. Mr. Pope raised his paper, and for a time pretended to be engrossed in a particularly gruesome murder " story " on the front page,

But his thoughts were elsewhere. He was wondering angrily what he had done to deserve such treatment. If that fool of a young officer next to him had made the remark it would, he was sure, have been received in a very different spirit.

Yet this was only one of many incidents that had occurred recently to disturb Mr. Pope's serenity. He was being made to realize that he had reached the age when a man is supposed to have finished and done with the lighter, pleasanter things of life—neat ankles and silk stockings, trim figures and pretty faces—all that goes to give zest to the game of living—in a word, romance.

He was supposed to have finished with all that—had his fling and settled down—he, Mr. Pope, who had hardly ever thought of

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such a thing—never, in fact, since that day, twelve years ago, when——

The train ran into a station—its only stop until it reached Woldington—and all the other occupants of the compartment alighted. Mr. Pope generally had his carriage to himself thence onwards, for the 5.47 was a "fast" train. He followed with his eyes the young lady of the ankles as she walked along the platform, until the train began to move again. Then he turned half-reluctantly to his *Evening Standard*.

Outside on the platform somebody shouted, and the next moment the door of his carriage was flung open. A young man, rather excited and very breathless, stumbled in, without bothering to shut the door after him, and, flinging a brown leather case he carried on to the rack, dropped into the opposite corner. Mr. Pope himself pulled the door to.

"Cut it rather fine," the young man observed, cheerfully. He was rather a pleasant-looking young fellow, about twenty-four years of age. He was wearing a straw hat, a light grey suit, which showed signs of wear, soft collar, and brown brogue shoes. A bank clerk possibly, Mr. Pope thought, or perhaps an architect's draughtsman or an authorized clerk on the Stock Exchange. Mr. Pope preserved his expression of aloofness and murmured:—

"Ah! Yes."

The young man glanced round.

"George!" he remarked. "I'm in a First." He grimaced. "With a third-class ticket."

Mr. Pope decided at once that he was neither a bank clerk nor a draughtsman nor a Stock Exchange clerk. He might be a gentleman or he might be a humble *employé* in a commercial counting-house. None of the other possibilities would have so frankly admitted that third-class ticket. Mr. Pope felt a slight glow of approval.

"Since we don't stop till Woldington," he observed, "you won't be worried by ticket-inspectors for a little while, anyhow."

The young man sat up with a jerk.

"Woldington!" he exclaimed. "Isn't this the London train?"

The question being so obviously futile, he did not wait for an answer.



"I'm going to pull the communication-cord. It would be

"George!" he said. "What an ass!"

Mr. Pope opened out his paper. "Rather awkward," he murmured, non-committally.

The young man stood up. "I say!" he observed, "it's worse than that. It's a bally tragedy." Dismay was written all over him. He thought for a minute. Then he looked at Mr. Pope.

"I tell you what," he said. "I'm going

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to pull the communication-cord. It would be cheap at five pounds. I've got a most important appointment in town at half-past six, with dinner at seven-thirty."

He put up his hand.

"I could jump out before the train stopped," the young man interrupted.

Mr. Pope drew down the corners of his mouth, a facial contortion peculiarly effective, and the young man allowed his arm to



cheap at five pounds. I've got a most important appointment in town at half-past six."

"I don't think I should do that if I were you," Mr. Pope remarked. "It would probably mean more delay. They'd arrest you and want to know all about it. They might take you along to the next station and lock you up for the night."

The young man hesitated. "D'you think they would?"

"I knew a man once——" Mr. Pope began.

drop to his side. He looked out of the window, and Mr. Pope knew he was wondering what his chances were if he leapt from the carriage on to the permanent way.

Mr. Pope dismissed the young man and resumed the broken thread of his ruminations.

Twelve years ago Mr. Pope had, by the narrowest of chances, missed a romance of

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his own. Her name was Julienne Ferris, and she lived near Mr. Pope, but in a very much smaller house. She lived with her aunt, and Mr. Pope met her occasionally in the afternoons at the local tennis club. Several times he had accompanied her home.

No more than that. Mr. Pope had been rather shy as a young man in the presence of ladies. Besides, he knew what his parents' views would have been on the subject of an alliance—a *mésalliance*—with Miss Ferris. Nevertheless, after a terrific emotional and mental storm which lasted a week, he had resolved to throw prudence to the winds and declare himself—to offer to Miss Julienne—he called her Julie in his thoughts—his hand and heart, and by no means insignificant, though prospective, fortune.

A week before, however, Julie, who was partly French, and spoke the language like a native, had accepted a post as English mistress in a Belgian girls' school, and on the day Mr. Pope reached his momentous decision she left England.

Mr. Pope remembered the day almost as though it had been yesterday. It was in November, and a thick fog overspread London. Julienne had been accompanied to Victoria by her aunt—her sole surviving relative—and there handed over to the Belgian lady who had engaged her. On her way from Victoria to Charing Cross, after seeing her niece off, the aunt had been knocked down by a brewer's dray and killed, and, as she alone had Julienne's address and appeared to have trusted to her memory to retain it, Mr. Pope was prevented, at least for the time being, from even writing to her.

He had heard nothing of her since. Such things frequently occur. A single broken link in the chain of circumstance that binds us one to another, and a friend may be completely lost sight of for many years, if not for ever. A short time afterwards his mother and father had died within three months of each other, leaving his sister to keep house for him. He had taken a seat on the board of the company with which his chief investments were concerned, and had rapidly found the business to demand a large part of his day. He had taken a commission in the Territorials.

From the age of twenty—when Julie had gone away—up to the time when the war came—Mr. Pope had led an extremely active and full life. During the war, too, his thoughts had been pretty well occupied.

It was only since his return that this sense of something lacking—this consciousness of the passing of the years and of opportunities lost—had begun to bother him.

If only he had not let Julie go! If he had not so confidingly trusted to luck to re-establish communication with her! If he had not dallied so long over making up his mind!

HE sat up with a jerk to realize that his fellow-traveller was addressing him.

"Reach Woldington?" he echoed, in response to the other's question. "Let me see, six-thirty, I believe. Yes, of course, six-thirty.

"Surely your friends will wait?" he added.

The young man leaned forward.

"It isn't friends," he said, miserably. "It's a friend, a lady. I was to meet her by the bookstall. You can't leave a girl standing by a bookstall for an hour or more all alone. Why, anything might happen! She'd have men speaking to her! Why——!"

"It is awkward," Mr. Pope agreed.

The young man's cheerful, boyish face had become almost haggard. 'Why, some bally porter or something might ask her to move on!" He looked out of the window again. "Besides, she wouldn't wait."

"Well," Mr. Pope suggested, 'perhaps, after all, in the circumstances——"

The young man was on his feet again. "Good God!" he exclaimed, passionately, "that's just the point—the circumstances, I mean. If it weren't—if this had happened at any other time—I wouldn't mind. At least, not so much. But to-night——!"

"Sit down," Mr. Pope said. He flung his paper on to the seat and the young man sat down obediently. "Now let's think what can be done. There's an up train leaves Woldington about five minutes before this train gets in. After that there's not another train for half an hour. Unfortunately, the up train is a slow one. Still——"

He leaned forward. "Just outside Wealdstone Road—that's the station before Woldington—we shall slow up crossing the points. We always do slow up there—it's an awkward bend. If you could manage to jump out you'd just be able to get back to Wealdstone Road in time to catch the up train there. That would get you up before half-past seven."

The young man shook his head. Plainly he was itching to be communicative—to lay his heart and soul bare with the disarming ingenuousness of youth. He saw his opportunity now.

"It's awfully decent of you to be so interested," he said, "and perhaps you think I'm kicking up a frightful fuss about a little thing. But the fact is——"

He looked at Mr. Pope and flushed youthfully.

"It isn't as though I was just taking her out somewhere for the evening," he said. "The fact is, we're to be married to-morrow.

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Only her old brute of a father won't hear of it. And she's running away."

Mr. Pope looked rather more severe than he had looked for the past ten minutes. Running away this evening and getting married to-morrow was not in accordance with his views of the right order of events. He didn't so much object to the running away. Indeed, the idea rather appealed to him. It was solacing to think that even in the twentieth century romance was not entirely dead. But you had to draw a line somewhere.

The young man may have divined his scruples, for he explained hurriedly :—

" I'm taking her along to a married sister of mine for the night, and we're to be married at a registry office first thing to-morrow morning."

Mr. Pope's features relaxed.

" The devil of it is," the young man went on, " she's not the sort of girl to be left about on a station for an hour."

" She wouldn't stand for it ? " Mr. Pope suggested, and the looseness of his phraseology was the measure of his warm personal interest in the affair.

" Yes, that, and—well, you know, she isn't the sort of girl a man passes without a second glance. Jolly nice looking and smart, and all that sort of thing."

" *Distinguée*," Mr. Pope hinted.

" Yes. Just that. There are women, you know—— "

" Yes." Mr. Pope suddenly found himself thinking of Julie. She was certainly *distinguée*. Very. The sort of woman you could be proud of being seen with. If she'd only a father to oppose the match, Mr. Pope felt he'd quite enjoy running off with her.

The young man was enlarging on his theme. " Such a sporting kid, too," he was saying. " I'm as poor as a church mouse. My governor kicked the bucket last year and left me pretty much on the rocks. And her governor's quite well off. That's the silly part of it. Wants her to marry a little blighter of a chap in the margarine trade, just because he's got a bank balance as big as the North Sea. So you can understand I feel pretty sick at letting her down."

Mr. Pope suddenly crossed his legs and picked up his paper. He had just had a brilliant inspiration, but it was not his habit to betray his excitement.

" I suppose this young lady you refer to—if she knew what had happened—would manage to keep herself occupied till you arrived ? "

For a moment the young man looked startled. " Why—— " he began, and then hastily substituted : " Oh, of course ! " He added : " What I'm afraid of is that when I don't turn up she'll be in such a stew that she'll simply clear off home again. And she'll never forgive me. You can quite understand it, can't you ? She's supposed to be staying the night with a friend of the family, but the friend doesn't know anything about it."

He became very miserable. " I say, it's jolly decent of you to be so sympathetic and all that," he observed, " but I don't really see—— "

" You think you'll be able to jump out of the train all right when we slow down, and catch the other at Wealdstone Road ? " Mr. Pope interrupted.

" Lord, yes ! " the young man replied, " if it slows down to anything below ten miles an hour. But I don't see—— "

" Then," said Mr. Pope, " suppose when I get to Woldington I call up the Station Hotel at the other end and get the head-waiter to find your friend and tell her what's happened ? How would that do ? "

HE turned over his paper casually, while he waited for the acknowledgment of this brilliant suggestion. It came, and it was adequate. The young man's face expressed wonder, surprise, conviction, relief, joy, and thankfulness in rapid succession, and when he found his voice it was to utter " By Jove ! " with such an abandonment of admiration that Mr. Pope was more than satisfied.

" Tell me," said Mr. Pope, " what she will be wearing. I shall have to describe her. Fortunately, I know the head-waiter at the Station Hotel, but I'm afraid I could hardly ask him to interrogate any young woman who happened to be waiting at the bookstall."

Again, for a moment, the young man looked unaccountably perturbed. " Well," he said, hastily pulling himself together, " I expect she'll be wearing the togs she's to be married in. Sort of fairly light grey costume with buttons, grey suède shoes and stockings, and one of those topping little hats with quill things sticking out—green, I think it is."

He looked a little doubtfully at Mr. Pope. " I think I could describe her better than her clothes," he observed.

Mr. Pope nodded absently. He was recalling Julie as he had seen her for the last time. Julie had been fond of grey—a light grey, smart and well tailored—but, of course, in her day suède shoes had not been generally worn. And hats were large then. He liked large hats. Not but that some of these small toque things were quite effective. He remembered having seen Julie in a toque once—a toque of grey fur. She had been perfectly adorable. He felt rather superior when he recalled the young man's very vague description of his *fiancée's* clothes. He remembered that when he had been for a walk with Julie

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he could describe her apparel down to the number of buttons on her jacket. It had been expected in those days. But now——

"Not that she's thin, either," he heard the young man droning on. 'But she's not the sort ever to get fat."

The young man looked at Mr. Pope earnestly. 'Oh, but hang it all!" he said, in a sudden burst of irresistible frankness, "a fellow doesn't fall in love with a girl's figure, does he? As long as she's not absolutely a frump! The thing is the girl herself, the way she looks at you, the way she thinks about things, the funny little thrill you get when her hair just brushes across your face or when she puts her hand on your arm to prevent your doing some damn silly thing or other. I tell you, since I've known Pippa—that's my name for her, you know, Pippa Passes sort of thing—since I've known her I've done things I never thought I could do. I've practically knocked off swearing, I've——"

Mr. Pope looked at his watch ostentatiously. The young man's confidences made him the slightest bit uncomfortable. He questioned if this were not carrying ingenuousness a step too far.

The boy saw the movement. "Where are we?" he asked.

The engine's whistle sounded shrilly and they flashed through a station. Then the speed began perceptibly to slacken.

"Thought so," Mr. Pope said. "Now's the time." He looked at his companion. "D'you think you'll manage it?" he asked, anxiously. He was surprised to find himself getting quite worked up. 'There's a board beside the line which says something about 'five miles an hour when passing over points.' But it's a bit of a jump."

The young man was supremely confident. "Trust me," he said. He reached up to the rack above Mr. Pope's head and took down the case. Then he held out his hand. "You don't know how much I'm indebted to you," he said. 'I hope——"

Mr. Pope shook his head perfunctorily. "You'd better take the other door," he remarked. "The guard will be watching on this side. 'Ware the up train. I think now is just about the moment."

THE train had dropped into a crawl, and jerked as it passed over the points. Mr. Pope opened the farther door of the carriage and stepped aside for the other to pass. The young man twisted himself out of the door on to the footboard and coolly closed the door after him.

Mr. Pope put his head through the open window. 'By the way," he shouted—for the engine's exhaust was being passed through the furnace as the train began to gather speed again—"hadn't you better tell me your young woman's name, so that the waiter——"

The young man, on the point of jumping, shouted something that Mr. Pope did not catch, and leapt.

Mr. Pope involuntarily shut his eyes for a second. When he opened them he saw the young man stumble to his knees in the track between the two lines of rails below, stagger to his feet, wave a hand towards the train, and then turn and begin to run.

Mr. Pope dropped on to the seat and passed his handkerchief across his perspiring brow. Then he noticed a slip ot paper on the floor—evidently pulled out ot his pocket by the young man. He picked it up. It was a rather pressing demand from a tailor for a long overdue account, and was directed to Mr. Gregory Haviland at an address in North-west London. Mr. Pope smiled, and put the slip of paper in his waistcoat pocket.

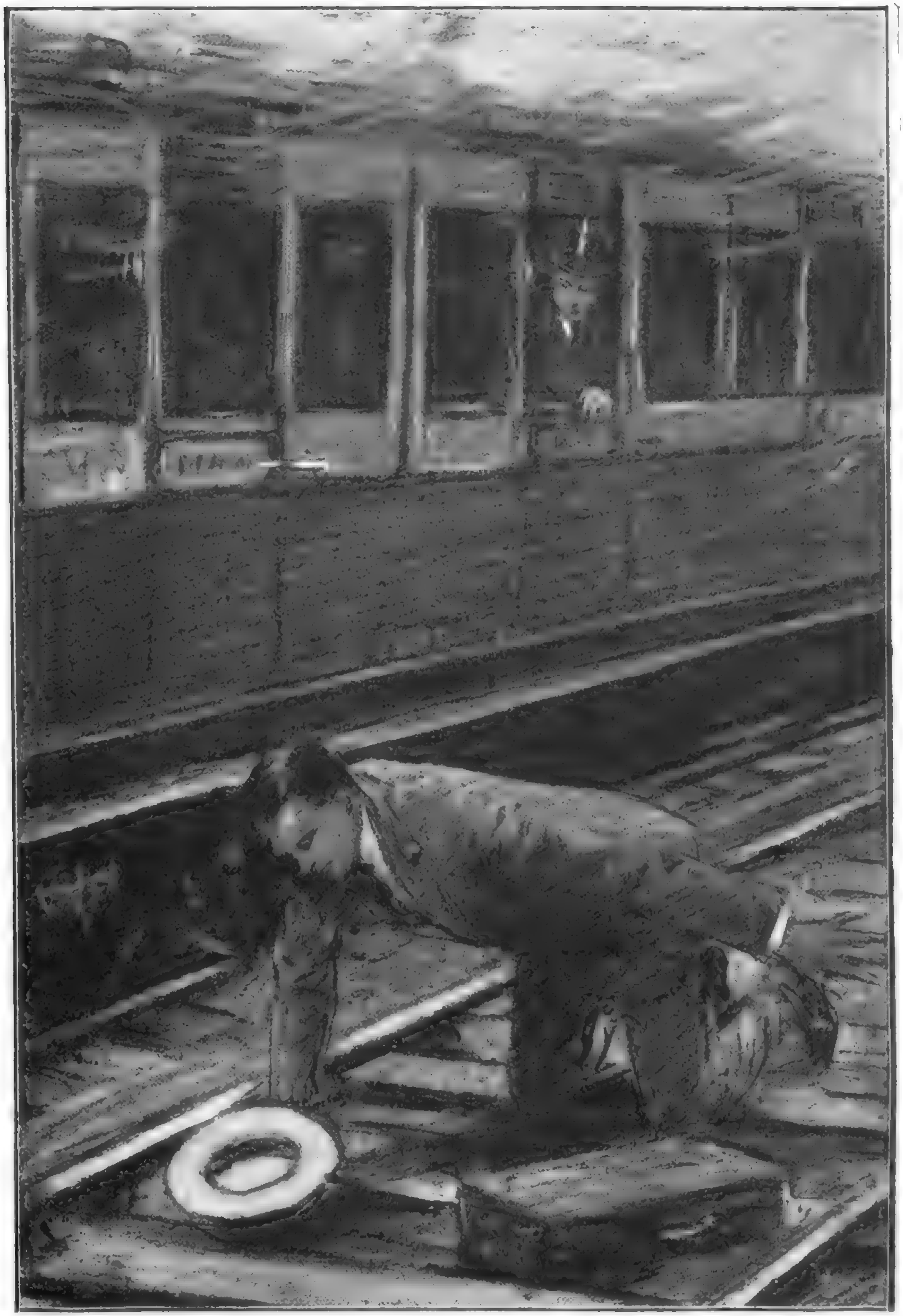
"Plucky young beggar!" he muttered. What it was to be young! Not, of course, that he himself was old. Far from it. Five years older than Julie? Ah, but after thirty a man aged so much more slowly than a woman. A man was as young as he felt, and Mr. Pope felt very young just then.

He compared himself with George Sitwell, his next-door neighbour, left a widower on the birth of his first—and therefore only—child. Sitwell couldn't be much over thirty-five. Yet Mr. Pope could give him points in all directions. Sitwell was the Head Master at the County School in Woldington, and his sole interest in life outside of school lay in his collection of foreign stamps. That very afternoon Mr. Pope had attended a sale on his behalf and paid out the ridiculous sum of three hundred pounds for a set of a dozen examples of the Bagdad Occupation issue.

Sitwell, good Lord! Imagine Sitwell in the situation Mr. Pope had just handled with such resourcefulness! The fellow would simply have sat stock still in his place and looked lugubrious. Foreign stamps! Sitwell lacked mental vigour, that was what was the matter with him. And he could give Mr. Pope a good six years in point of age!

At Woldington he got out and crossed the footbridge. By the booking-office on the up side there was a telephone call-box. Mr. Pope entered, placed his bag on the floor, lifted the receiver, and gave a number. It was the number of the Station Hotel. Mr. Pope knew it. He had stayed at the Station Hotel on a number of occasions when he had missed the last train in the evening after a theatre. Also when he had wished to catch a very early train down to the South Coast at Easter and such times. There was, indeed, a small private dining-room at the Station Hotel that Mr. Pope had

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"Mr. Pope involuntarily shut his eyes. When he opened them he saw the young man stumble to his knees between the lines of rails below."

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engaged for the evening on two occasions during an otherwise blameless twelve years.

Mr. Pope asked to be permitted to speak to Saunders, the head-waiter. Saunders came to the 'phone, and Mr. Pope briefly outlined to him the little *contretemps* he counted on Saunders to put right.

And as he was talking a brilliant idea came to him.

"Oh! And look here, Saunders," he remarked, "these young people are—er—sort of *protégées* of mine. I'd like to do something to give them a sort of send-off, you know—because I can't be there personally." The last was a hasty extemporization for Saunders's benefit.

"So, I say, Saunders, I want you to give 'em a nice little feed at my expense—you know, perhaps a few oysters to begin with wouldn't be a bad notion. And a bottle of that Château Loudenne. I leave it to you to do them well."

He chuckled to himself. This was a good scheme. He could see himself repeating the story—to his sister first of all when he felt in a provocative mood, and then to one or two men who went up in the morning by his train. Then, perhaps, to his co-directors after the next board meeting. Ah! and to old Sitwell. It would make a good story.

A further refinement suggested itself as peculiarly appropriate to the occasion—though he thought he'd miss this out in repeating the story to his sister.

"You there, Saunders? Well, look here, suppose you serve them in that little private room on the first floor. You know. The room with the piano. Put a few flowers on the table and the sideboard. And perhaps, instead of the claret, you might make it champagne. Eh! What's that? No, I haven't finished! Damn!"

Mr. Pope's expletive fell harmlessly into the unresponsive mouthpiece. He had had his three minutes and the line was disconnected.

For a moment or two he hesitated. There were several things he had wanted to explain to Saunders. As to tips—— And, of course, his name had better not be mentioned. And then——

FOR the third time that evening Mr. Pope had an inspiration. Why should he not run up to town and join the little party?—even if he only got in at the death. After all, he was the host, and it was hardly in keeping for him to remain absent from the whole proceedings. Besides, might not his presence do something towards enlivening the occasion? It has already been observed that Mr. Pope was not entirely without those arts of social intercourse that may do so much to banish the twin demons of boredom and restraint when two or three are gathered together round a festive board.

Mr. Pope imagined himself proposing a toast—"The bride and bridegroom of the morrow!" He revolved in his mind a few felicitous phrases suitable to the occasion. Nor would he neglect the more serious side of the great undertaking in which these two young people were about jointly to engage.

While he wandered up and down the empty platform waiting for the next up train he thought again of his own life and its blasted promise, and a well-worn couplet occurred to him:—

'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.

He would quote that to them; but he would round it out, complete it, with a couplet of his own composed on the spot—which had the additional merit of rhyming:—

'Tis better still to love and keep,
Though joy and sorrow both you reap.

The train came in as he hit upon the second line, but most of the way up to town his thoughts were occupied with alternative rhymes, thus:—

'Tis better still to love and keep
Till life is rounded with a sleep.

Finally, however, he decided that his first choice was the best and most appropriate to the circumstances.

When at length the train drew into the terminus Mr. Pope could hardly restrain his eagerness to meet his young *protégées*, as he chose to consider them. Hurrying past the ticket-collector, he made straight for the Station Hotel. In the vestibule he buttonholed a passing waiter without ceremony or preface.

"Where's Saunders?" he demanded. "I want Saunders. Send him to me."

He stood there restlessly tattooing with his foot on the floor—a rather excited, flurried Mr. Pope, with his silk hat not quite straight, his bag and umbrella in one hand and his evening paper, very crumpled and creased, in the other. Very little of his habitual austerity of appearance remained. And the sparkle of anticipation in his eyes gave him an almost youthful look that somehow did not completely fit in with the more impersonal elements of his exterior.

After a few moments he was made aware of Saunders's presence at his left elbow by a deferential "Good evening, sir."

He turned sharply and drew the head-waiter into a more secluded part of the foyer.

"Ah! Saunders, good evening. Er—you attended to that little matter, Saunders?"

Saunders was perfectly imperturbable.

"Yes, sir."

"Everything all right, eh? They cut us

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off in the middle. I hadn't finished. I wanted to tell you, Saunders, not to accept anything in the way of tips. I'll see to all that. And perhaps, if you haven't mentioned it already, it would be as well to keep my name out of it. You see, Saunders—— "

Mr. Pope broke off in some confusion, realizing that by some means or other he was not maintaining strict consistence. Saunders helped him out.

" Just so, sir. But I'm sorry, sir, the lady wouldn't listen to me until I mentioned your name."

" Really ! " Mr. Pope could not conceal his surprise.

" Yes, sir. But as soon as I said Mr. Pope, sir, she became, as you might say, another person. Quite pleasant and affable. ' Mr. Hartley Pope ? ' she inquired, and when I said that was your name she smiled, and came with me quite docile. She said she didn't know what it was all about, but if it was Mr. Hartley Pope it was all right."

Mr. Pope remained bewildered, but he did not choose that Saunders should observe it, and he murmured, hastily :—

" Ah, no doubt. She would recognize the name. Knows the company probably—Hartley Pope and Knight."

He broke off.

" And the young man, Saunders ? I suppose—— " he inquired, suddenly.

" He hasn't turned up yet, sir. The young lady's up there alone, waiting for him. The room's all ready, sir, just as you said, and I asked her if she'd like anything to drink just to pass the time like, but she said ' No.' So I gave her some magazines and she seemed quite happy, sir, sitting on the settee."

" Good heavens ! Saunders ! " Mr. Pope interposed, " you don't mean to say she's been waiting all this time up there alone ? "

" Well, sir—— " Saunders was mildly indignant at the suggestion of rebuke in Mr. Pope's voice. He pointed out that he could hardly have offered to keep her company, besides having his duties to attend to.

" That's quite all right, Saunders," Mr. Pope remarked, consolingly. " I'm not blaming you. But it's very unfortunate."

He pondered a moment. " I think I'd better go up and see this—er—young woman."

Saunders led the way, but at the door of the private dining-room Mr. Pope paused. " You've made no mistake, Saunders, I hope ? " he said. " The description was a little vague and loose, I'm afraid."

Saunders looked at him stolidly. " Green hat, grey costume, neat figure, silk stockings," he said. " That's what you said, sir, as far as I remember."

" Quite right, Saunders," Mr. Pope responded. " By the way, did you notice her age ? She should be about twenty-four, I suppose."

He had given up all attempt to deceive Saunders as to his familiarity with the lady.

Saunders shook his head sagaciously. " I never was no good at guessing a lady's age, sir," he remarked. " She might be twenty-four—or then, again, she might be thirty-six."

" Thirty-six, Saunders ! "

" She might be. I don't say she is."

Saunders was more stolid than ever, and Mr. Pope was rapidly becoming a bundle of nerves. He drew out a pocket-handkerchief and blew his nose loudly.

" I think I'd better go in now, Saunders," he said, in a slightly weary tone. " Perhaps you'll announce me."

Saunders opened the door and stepped inside, his form blocking out Mr. Pope.

" Excuse me, miss," he said, " Mr. Pope has arrived and is here." He spoke rather pompously, then stood aside for Mr. Pope to enter, and rapidly withdrew.

THE little room in which Mr. Pope found himself was not, as has been explained, entirely unfamiliar to him. But he had never seen it so attractively arranged as this evening. The small round table was set for two, and glittered and shone with white damask and polished cutlery. In the centre stood a tall vase of yellow and purple irises, and about the room were smaller vases of sweet-peas, while on a table under the window stood a huge bowl of roses. The room was a riot of flowers and glittering tableware and cut glass, which the six shaded electric lights made to shine and gleam.

And yet Mr. Pope was aware at first of only one thing in the room, and that was the splash of bright green over on the farther side, which was the hat of the lady sitting on the settee. She held a magazine on her knees and sat there, motionless, as patient to all appearances now as she had been an hour and more ago when Saunders had first installed her there.

Mr. Pope, after hesitating the fraction of a second within the doorway, stepped forward, a phrase of profound, abased apology on his lips.

It was never spoken. He stopped midway across the room and passed a hand swiftly across his forehead.

" Julie ! " he exclaimed.

And then :—

" Julie, my dear ! "

He rushed forward, his hands outstretched. With the slightest possible jerk of her knees she shook the magazine off on to the floor and took his hands in hers, smiling serenely.

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Then she stood up. She was dressed in a plain costume of grey, neatly pressed and fitting like a glove, but the least bit threadbare. Her shoes were of grey suède and her stockings of grey silk. But the gloves she had left lying on the settee had been darned in several places, and the handbag that lay beside them was slightly worn at the edges.

Mr. Pope, however, noticed none of these things. All he did notice were the little lines at the corners of her eyes and behind their brightness the tired, almost frightened look in the eyes themselves.

"My dear!" he said again.

She gave a little rippling laugh that was music to him.

"Well, you wonderful man," she exclaimed, "how on earth did you discover me? I've only been in England twelve hours."

She looked at him, and she did not try to hide the fact that she was glad to see him, nor that, mingled with her pleasure, was a certain admiration at what she believed to be his astuteness.

"I—I——" Mr. Pope stammered. To hide his confusion he turned and waved his arm at the table.

"Let's eat," he said, with a sudden courtly masterfulness. "The feast is prepared." He found the bell and pressed it. "I'm sorry to have kept you so long. Explanations can follow."

IT was not until they reached the coffee that the explanations were concluded. Then, as he held a match to Julie's cigarette, Mr. Pope observed:—

"Poor beggar! I wonder if she waited. We shall never know, I suppose." He was referring to the young man in the train. Out of the fullness of his heart he sighed.

And Julie sighed, too, very prettily. "I can't bear to think of their not being happy together after having made us so happy," she observed, from which it will be gathered that the meal had not been entirely devoted to the other couple. "But I'm sure she waited. A woman always does. I waited for twelve years."

Mr. Pope caught her fingers and lifted them to his lips. Then he looked at his watch.

"Agnes goes to bed at eleven," he said. "I think we'd better be moving."

He had risen and was looking for his bag, which he had dropped just inside the door. "Have to give 'em a cheque," he explained. He found the bag as Saunders arrived with his bill.

Placing the bag on his knees, he inserted a key in the lock. But the key would not turn, and when he pressed back the catch he found that it was not locked.

"By Jove!" he remarked, "that was pretty careless." He dropped the keys into his pocket and opened the bag.

Julie, who was attending to her hair in the glass over the mantelpiece, turned at his amazed ejaculation.

He was taking from the bag a sheaf of newspapers. When they had been removed nothing remained. He shut the bag and turned it over curiously. Gradually the light of understanding spread over his features and he sprang to his feet, his hands clenched and his face quickly became purple.

"Well, of all the impudent, dastardly swindles!" he burst out. "Under my very nose!" Too overcome for coherent expression, he pointed to the bag lying open and empty on the floor. "Changed it right under my own eyes!" he spluttered. "Of all the shameless——"

He caught Julie's eye. There was the suggestion of a smile in it, and Mr. Pope stopped dead in the middle of his outburst. But he could not easily overlook the outrage that had been played on him by the young man in the train.

"Three hundred pounds' worth of unique, irreplaceable foreign stamps—as well as my cheque-book!" he growled. "He must have followed me from the sale-room. A complete put-up job. The police will have to know about this."

Julie's smile spread.

"Am I too expensive at three hundred pounds?" she inquired, demurely.

"Good heavens, my dear child!" Mr. Pope exclaimed. And he, too, began to smile—grudgingly at first, and then without restraint as the amusing side of the affair struck him. He picked up his bill from the table.

"You'll have to help me out with this, at all events," he observed, with mock solemnity.

Julie picked up the rather threadbare bag and took out two one-pound notes.

"All I have in the world," she remarked, as she handed them to him. "So you can understand a certain tenderness on my part towards your young friend." She shrugged her shoulders. "*C'est la vie!*"

"Eh!" exclaimed Mr. Pope. He was looking rather stupidly at the notes. "Oh, yes, of course!"

He drew from his waistcoat pocket the tailor's bill he had picked up in the carriage after the young man had gone, and, tearing it into small pieces, dropped it into the grate.

"Of course," he repeated, "as you observe, *c'est la vie!*"

He picked up the bag and carefully closed

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"'Well, you wonderful man,' she exclaimed, 'how on earth did you discover me?'"

it. "I can stop those cheques all right in the morning," he said, "but won't old Sitwell be mad!" He thought about that for a moment and chuckled. 'He'll never see the joke," he remarked.

He never did.

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THE SENSE of HUMOUR IN CHILDREN

by DR C.W. KIMMINS

(Chief Inspector of the Education Department of the L.C.C.)

THAT a sense of humour is a priceless possession is generally acknowledged. In all the important crises of life, the ability to bring to bear on a difficult situation the eternal spirit of childhood is a very great solace which is denied to those in whom the sense of humour is lacking. An investigation of the sense of humour in children at different ages, and the conditions which are favourable to its full play and development, becomes, therefore, a matter of more than ordinary interest. For this purpose the writer has analysed some thousands of funny stories and jokes, which were obtained from children in response to the following questions :—

(1) Give an account of the funniest story you have ever read or heard.

(2) Of all the jokes that you can remember, give an account of the one which made you laugh the most.

For children who were too young to give written answers, oral methods were adopted by careful observers.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS.

During the inquiry the points to which most attention was given in the records of funny stories and jokes were those dealing with the type of story, the element of superiority in which the stupidity of the object is emphasized, playing with words, boisterous fun (ragging and playing the fool), the misfortunes of others, and the nature of the element of surprise in the joke.

The changes noted from age to age can only be roughly approximated, as some of the elements are constant in their appeal. There are, however, certain elements which predominate at particular periods of the school life and can be clearly distinguished.

CHILDREN OF FIVE AND SIX YEARS OF AGE.

At the ages of five and six children are amused by action, noise, and dramatic effects : someone falling down, funny dancing, bumping into each other, grotesque faces and figures, things upside down and inside out, dressing up when they take part, and funny sounds. Jokes told to young children only appeal through the dramatic instinct and depend for their effect on the inflections of the voice and the facial expressions or actions of the narrator. Verbal or written fun, without dramatic action, can only be appreciated when children can read fairly fluently. One observer read in an ordinary voice some of a well-known comedian's most obvious stories to the children in an infant school without raising a smile. Funny or grotesque illustrations drawn in front of the children by the teacher, which they are afterwards allowed to reproduce, greatly delight small children, probably due to the actions and discussions produced as the picture grows.

The appreciation of humour by young children must not be confused with children's smart and witty sayings. These are said without any intention of their being humorous. It is *naïveté* pure and simple. Sully in his Essay on Laughter records the case of a child of three who, having heard his mother say that Mr. Fawkes was coming to lunch, said, " Will Mrs. Knives come too ? " A child of five, who had been placed in Class 2B by his teacher, on being asked by the head mistress what class he was in, said " 2B," and then said quite distinctly to the boy next to him, " or not to be " ; but cases of puns of children under seven are very rare.

As examples of *naïveté* may be quoted :—

(*a*) A clever child wrote a play which was acted by children. In the first act there was a wedding, and at the end of the ceremony the husband said, " And now, my dear, I must leave you and go abroad and make my fortune." In the second act he returned, bringing bags of gold and beautiful presents for his wife. Recording his adventures, he concluded by saying, " I have had to work very hard." " Yes, my dear," replied his wife, " and I also have not been idle," and drawing aside a curtain she presented him with four children.

(*b*) A father, entering his little son's bedroom, overheard this portion of the boy's evening prayer : " If I should die during the night, please excuse me coming to heaven in my pyjamas."

The Punch and Judy Show, which is a

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very great favourite with children, is universal in its appeal. In some form it is to be found in all highly civilized communities. When a good performance of this type is analysed, it is found to embrace practically all the essential elements of mirth-production. The University professor and the street urchin vie with each other in their appreciation of the Punch and Judy Show, provided, of course, that a good standard of production is reached.

The irresistible appeal of Charlie Chaplin to young children is due to the fact that he is breaking all the usual conventions of society and is doing, in a very amusing way, the very things that children are forbidden to do. The continual movement, variety, and change of action, so dear to the child mind, increase the effect.

SEVEN YEARS OF AGE.

The records of children of this age mark the transition from the purely visual type of humorous situation to an elementary playing with words. At this stage there is a very marked difference between the boys and girls. The stories of the boys mainly consist of cinema and fairy tales, and many of the jokes have for their basis the misfortunes of others. On the other hand, the stories of the girls are almost exclusively fairy tales, a large percentage of which are about the story of the three bears, which retains its appeal to children far longer than might have been anticipated.



"A sense of humour is a priceless possession."

In the girls' records there are many riddles and much play upon words, but these elements are missing from those of the boys. Humorous situations, based on the misfortunes of others, do not bulk so largely in the girls' as in the boys' records.

EIGHT YEARS OF AGE.

At this stage the misfortunes of others and fairy stories, including those about talking animals, are very common in the records of boys and girls. The boys now take an interest in riddles and playing with words, but in this respect are far behind the girls. The feeling of superiority makes its appearance in the accounts of mistakes of younger children. The girls here, as at other ages, associate stupidity with the boys, but there is no reciprocal action in the case of the boys. The favourite fairy story is still the three bears. There is a marked increase now in domestic stories. Those of boisterous fun are far more common with the girls than with the boys. A great falling off is to be noted in cinema stories.

NINE YEARS OF AGE.

Here there is a very great change. The intelligent child of this age has, to a large extent, overcome the mechanical arts of reading and writing, is a voracious reader, and is rapidly acquiring a fair background of useful knowledge. Boys and girls of this period are particularly interested in funny stories and jokes. The good fairy story is still very popular, especially with girls. The domestic story is improving, and accounts of comic incidents from well-known books are quoted. One girl of nine says: "The funniest book I have ever read is Mr. Shakespeare's Comedy of Errors." The feeling of superiority is increasing, and stories and jokes of amusing mistakes are very popular.

The story of the woman, the deck-chair, the oranges, and the shark, which has a great vogue among children, appears at this stage.

There was a storm at sea, and in order to lighten the ship, the sailors threw overboard a fat woman, a box of oranges, and a deck-chair. The storm having abated, a large shark was caught and was hauled aboard. On cutting it open the woman was found sitting in the deck-chair selling oranges at three a penny.

An amusing story, or one considered to be amusing by the children, spreads rapidly through the school and from school to school. Riddles and play upon words still maintain their position at this age, but the popularity of the misfortunes of others, as a source of merriment, is ceasing to interest, and soon disappears entirely.

TEN YEARS OF AGE.

The children are still very keen, and books of jokes and comic papers are eagerly bought

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and read. The power of graphic description has improved. Funny stories from good books are increasing in number. "Alice in Wonderland," "Helen's Babies," "Three Men in a Boat," and "Tom Sawyer" are often quoted. At this age much attention is given to the affairs of the class-room as affording suitable material for the gratification of the sense of humour. The inspector is the subject of much ridicule; *e.g.*:—

(*a*) An inspector was writing out his report on the school in an empty class-room. Being disturbed by a great noise in an adjoining room, he rushed in, seized the person who was talking more than the others, took him into his room, refused to hear any explanation, ordered him to sit quietly on a chair, and went on with his report. Shortly afterwards a knock was heard and a small boy entered the room. "What do you want?" said the inspector. "Please, sir, you've got our teacher," said the boy.

(*b*) An inspector was testing the arithmetic in a class, and inverted the numbers given by



"The Punch and Judy Show is universal in its appeal."

writing them on the blackboard; *e.g.*, if the children said 26, he would write 62; if they said 87, he would write 78, and so on. At last a rude boy said, "33—now muck about with that."

The teacher who explains the meaning of a word, and asks the children to construct sentences containing the word, gives much scope for laughter; *e.g.*:—

(*a*) A teacher, in reply to questions, explained that "trickling" was another word for running, and that the word "anecdote" meant a short tale. He then asked the children to construct a sentence containing these words. One of the answers was, "A dog was trickling down the street, with a tin-can tied to his anecdote."

(*b*) The children were told to make up a sentence containing the word "notwithstanding," to which a boy replied, "My brother has shiny trousers, but notwithstanding."

The appropriate attitude of the children to the teacher is also a subject of merriment; *e.g.*:—

(*a*) A teacher explained that the word "heirloom" meant something which descended from father to son, whereupon a boy said, "Well, teacher, that's the funniest word I've ever heard for a pair of trousers."

(*b*) The subject of the Flood was under discussion, and the children were asking what the people in the Ark were doing all the time the water was going down. The teacher ventured the suggestion that much of their time was spent in fishing, but a boy refused to accept this theory on the ground that there were only two worms in the Ark.

Such incidents satisfy the requirement of the feeling of superiority, which is still a very important factor. At this age the fairy story still retains its hold and boisterous fun is kept within its proper limits. Riddles are on the decrease, but the play upon words is increasing and improving in quality.

ELEVEN TO THIRTEEN YEARS OF AGE.

The stories and jokes of the boys and girls of nine and ten years of age give evidence of a considerable advance in the appreciation of amusing incidents. Naturally the material is of a primitive type, but it was improving rapidly and appeared to give promise of important developments, especially in the play upon words and in the selection of funny stories from good literature. At the ages under consideration, however, there is a very marked deterioration, especially at twelve years of age, when the sense of humour seems to have disappeared entirely. This period appears to mark quite clearly the parting of the ways. Great physical changes are taking place; rapid growth is in progress and reaches its maximum increase at twelve years of age, when, according to the most trustworthy figures, the boy increases in height by seven and the girl by nine centimetres, after which the curve of growth tends to flatten. Associated with these physical changes there is a tendency for the children to break away to a certain

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extent from established authority and to think out things for themselves, and the appreciation of good literature is weakened. The funny story is now of a more personal nature; it is a story they have heard rather than one they have read. Their own experiences bulk largely. The element of superiority runs riot and they delight in extravagant stories of stupidity concerned with adults rather than children. American exaggeration and Irish stories are very popular, and the sayings of parrots are the sole survivors of the earlier animal stories. As examples of exaggeration stories the following may be mentioned :—

(*a*) An American passing the Law Courts in a bus asked the conductor how long it took to put up "that block of buildings." The conductor replied, "Oh, about seven years." "In our country," said the American, "that would have taken about seven weeks." Later on the bus was passing Westminster Abbey, and the American inquired what was the name of the building. The conductor replied that he didn't know, as it wasn't there when he passed in the morning.

(*b*) A man was shaving when a sudden knock was heard at the door; this startled him, and he had the misfortune to cut off his nose. In his excitement he dropped his razor, which cut off one of his toes. A doctor was called in and bound up the wounds. After some days the bandages were removed, when it was found that the nose had been fixed on to the foot and the toe on to the face. The man made a complete recovery, but it was very awkward, because every time he wanted to blow his nose he had to take his boot off.

Of the Irish stories, the Maryhill incident is the most popular :—

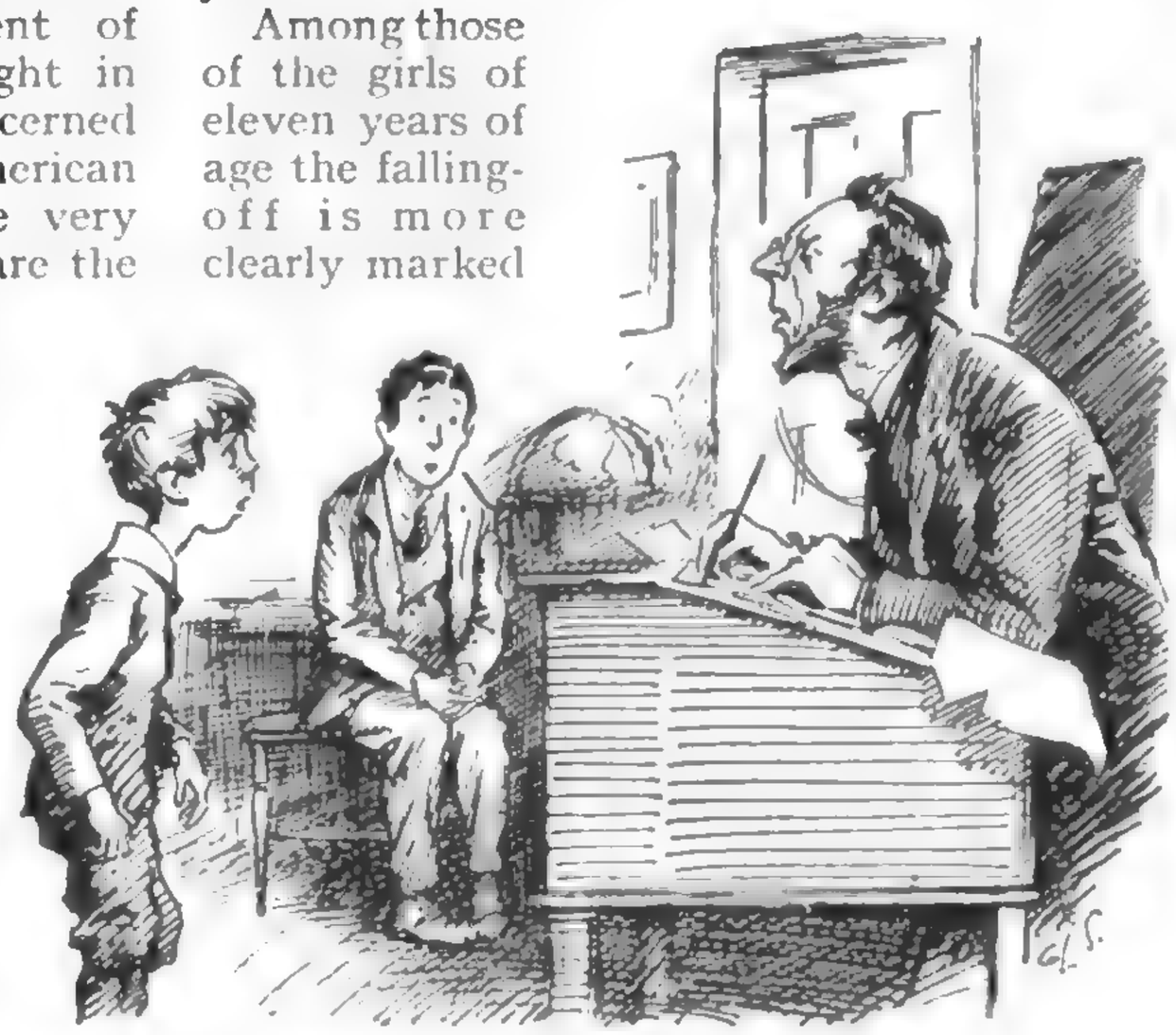
An Irishman who had never been on a railway journey before was told to take his ticket at the booking office in the same way as the other passengers. In front of him a lady going to Maryhill said to the booking clerk, "Maryhill, single"; and the Irishman followed with "Pat Murphy, married."

This is the age when many stories are related of the idiosyncrasies of the English, Scotch, and Welsh, a very popular one being the nature of the presents taken home by representatives of England, Scotland, and Wales.

The Englishman brought home "A tea-cosy from Cork," the Welshman "A tea-pot from Dublin," and the Scotsman "a cup and saucer bearing the inscription 'The Great Western Railway Company.'"

The boys' football stories are singularly bad, and betray an inadequate sense of humour. The boisterous fun element comes into a larger proportion of stories than at any other period, and consists mainly of ragging stories and somewhat crude practical jokes.

Among those of the girls of eleven years of age the falling-off is more clearly marked than in those of the boys, which in many cases show a slight improvement on the ten-year-old stories. The story of the woman who slipped on the polished plate of the *Victory* marking the place where Nelson fell, and who told the guide that she was not surprised that Nelson fell on this spot for she nearly fell there herself, is often quoted. Far and away the lowest point in the material which affords amusement is reached with boys and girls at the age of twelve. Towards the close of the thirteen-year-old stage there is, in the case of girls, a recovery; but there is no indication of this in that of the boys. With them it is not reached until the age of fourteen and, in some cases, fifteen years.



"Please, sir, you've got our teacher."

During the eleven-to-thirteen period the riddle practically disappears and is not revived at later ages.

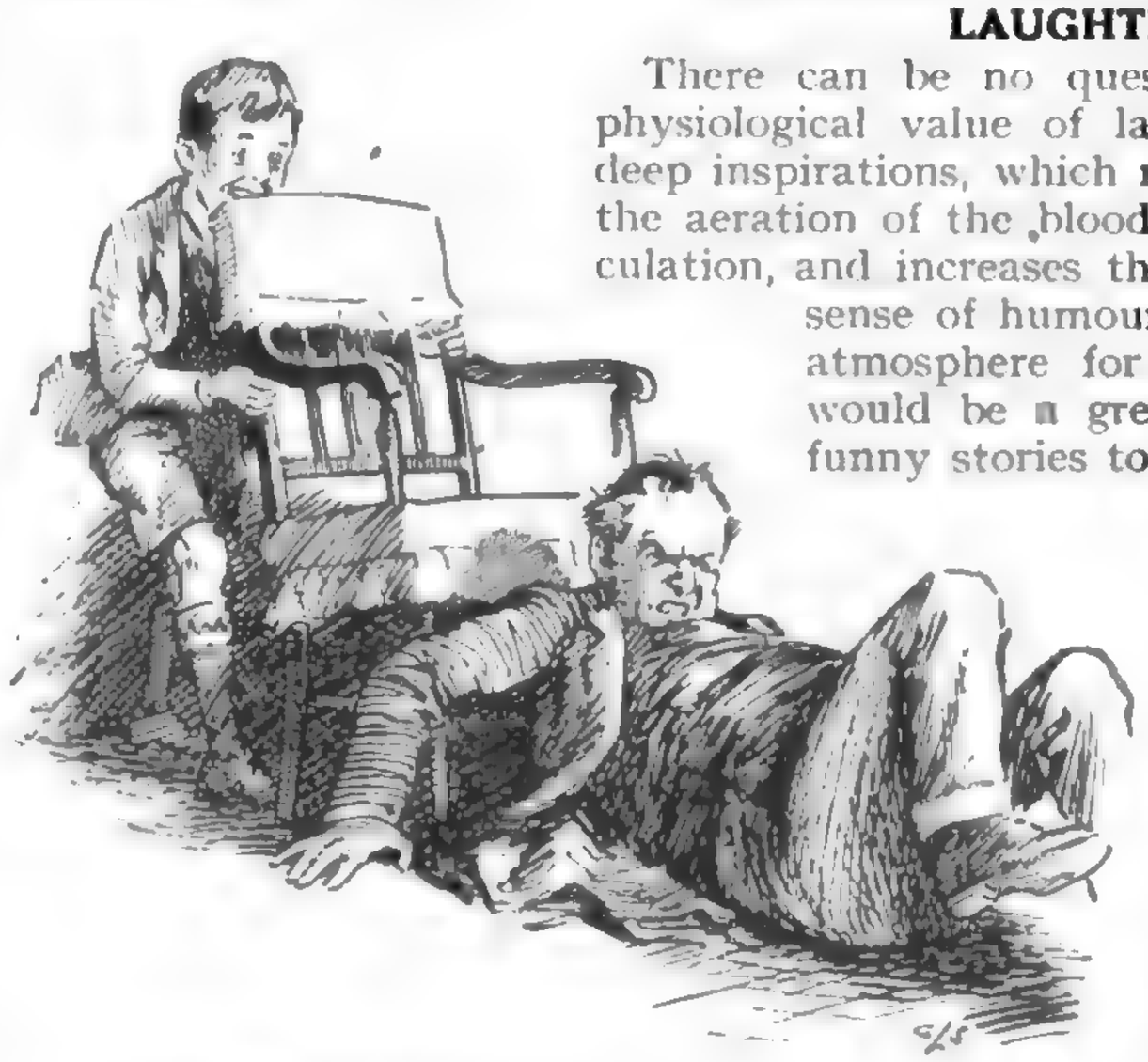
The great change during this period is the diversion from fun found in childish incidents, in the fairy story, in books of some literary merit, and in the affairs of the class-room, which are so common during the ages of nine and ten, to adult material of an inferior kind, much of which is imperfectly understood. When the revival comes there is a far greater resemblance to the material of the ten-year-old child than to that of children in the serious gap from eleven to thirteen, and there is far less of the boisterous element, Irish stories of stupidity, and those dealing with American exaggeration.

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FOURTEEN TO EIGHTEEN YEARS OF AGE.

During this period a very great improvement takes place. In the selection of funny stories, a much larger percentage comes from the work of well-known writers. The stories of W. W. Jacobs and Ian Hay (" Happy-Go-Lucky " especially) are very popular. Of individual stories, " Three Men in a Boat," " Daddy-Long-Legs," " Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch," " The Young Visiters," " Huckleberry Finn," " Tom Sawyer," " Helen's Babies," and " Alice in Wonderland " are much quoted. The culture of a good home has a great influence on the choice and variety of stories; whereas the very poor child relies on the school and the comic papers for his material. Stories for which originality is claimed by the narrator are mainly *naïveté* stories of young children. Their personal contributions, however, increase in value, and some of them give considerable promise of future witticisms. The children quote less and less of the old stories.

At seventeen and eighteen years of age there appears to be a still further improvement, and some of the stories and jokes are remarkably good. The boisterous fun element is gradually disappearing, and is of a very different character from that of the eleven-to-thirteen period.



" Opportunity should be given for practical jokes."

DOMESTIC STORIES.

The home-stories are principally of three types :—

1. Those in which the father is the object of ridicule, such, for example, as :—

(*a*) A child had a favourite dog called Paddy. One night an accident happened, and Paddy was killed. The mother broke the news to the child the following morning, and was surprised to find that so little notice was taken of it. Later on the mother heard screams coming from the nursery, and the child cried out, " Oh, mother, Paddy's dead." " But I told you so at breakfast time," said the mother. " I didn't understand you, mother," replied the child. " I thought you said Daddy."

(*b*) A child was admiring her mother's new silk dress : her mother, interested in natural history, explained to her that all the beautiful silk came from a little worm. " Was that Daddy, mum ? " asked the child.

2. Those in which the child deals with visitors who have to be informed that the mother is out, whereas she is in, and by stupidity the child reveals the fact; and

3. The sayings of young children, some of which are said to be original; for example, a child had noticed that her father, in presenting his books to his friends, always wrote in them, " With the Author's Compliments." On receiving a birthday present of a Bible from her little girl, her mother found on the first page the inscription, " With the Author's Compliments."

THE VALUE AND FUNCTION OF LAUGHTER.

There can be no question of the great physiological value of laughter. It causes deep inspirations, which result in improving the aeration of the blood, quickens the circulation, and increases the joy of life. The sense of humour requires a joyous atmosphere for its operation. It would be a great mistake to tell funny stories to a person suffering from sea-sickness. There would be no suitable response and the stories would be wasted. After a period of restraint the conditions for laughter are highly favourable. At Church parade laughter is readily produced because it follows a period of restraint during which laughter would have been unseemly.

In young children laughter within limits should be encouraged, and opportunity should be given for the full exercise of the spirit of play and practical jokes. Later on visual humour will be followed by play upon words, and with intelligent children this may be succeeded by playing with thoughts in the form of witticisms.

" The Vindication of Louis de Rougemont: New Light on a Twenty-year-old Mystery."

SEE IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT ON BACK OF FRONTISPIECE.

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DID KRESSLER KILL HIS WIFE?

by

H. de VERE STACPOOLE

ILLUSTRATED BY S. SEYMOUR LUCAS

I.

THE boat train was drawing into Victoria, and Kressler, seated in the corner of a smoking carriage and strapping a bag, was finishing a conversation about orchids.

The party of the second part in this conversation, a stout little man looking bored and stiff, was exchanging a travelling cap for a bowler, trying to arrange his thoughts in a fitting manner to meet London after a fifteen years' absence in India, and, at the same time, not to appear rude.

"Of course," said Kressler, "all those variations taking the forms of insects and beetles and so on are due simply to modifications of the pieces of the floral envelopes. The envelopes are constructed irregularly upon a ternary type and have three exterior and three interior pieces. The exterior pieces are less brightly coloured than the interior, and the two lateral ones are often of a somewhat different form from the other. If I had a pencil and bit of paper I could explain better."

"It don't matter," said the little man, hurriedly. "I take your meaning. Well, here we are at last." He let the window down on the platform side and, as the train came to a standstill, hailed a porter.

Kressler did the same.

"Not that," said Kressler. "I'll take that myself." He referred to a parcel in the rack overhead, a brown canvassed parcel that bore the stamp of the East as well as the initials "J. K."

When his luggage had been arranged on and about two taxis, Kressler got into the first, disposed the J. K. parcel on one of the front seats, tipped the porter half a crown, and said: "26A, Pont Street."

Kressler was forty-seven years of age; a lean, tanned, nervous individual with a heavy moustache and the eyes of a fanatic; he had one idea with a double string, and one hobby—the Orchidaceæ and the Coleoptera.

His glass-houses at Kniveton, down in Bucks, covered acres, his town house at 26A, Pont Street, had almost the atmosphere of a glass-house, due to the heating of a great conservatory at its back, a conservatory where choice specimens of the terrestrial ophrydeæ of Pleurothallis, Cattleya, Vanilleæ, Maxillaria Cypripedium, and other marvels held court and received old pre-war German professors from Tubingen, orchid fanatics from America, men from Kew. His collection of beetles was unique. Men laughed at Kressler for diverting part of his great wealth into the collection and cultivation of these forms; had he taken up with race-horses, or broken himself over theatres, they would have reckoned him sane enough, but for a man to devote his life to beetles and orchids! Maybe they were right, seeing that Kressler devoted to these things an ambition that might have made him Prime Minister, had it been properly coupled with his will-power and wealth—seeing also that he was married to a charming little fluffy-headed woman whom he left now and then for months and months, whilst he was off on

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one of his mad slants in pursuit of his heart's desire. He was just back now from the Solomon Islands, by way of India, after an absence of nine months.

The cabs stopped at No. 26A, Pont Street. Kressler ran up the steps, rang, and was admitted by Burden. Burden, though of the breed of the old English side-whiskered butler, had still something floral about him, caught, maybe, from his environment. In form he suggested a bulb; his colour was even more florid than the interior pieces of Maxillaria Cypripedium.

"Got my wire?" asked Kressler.

"Yes, sir," replied Burden, taking his master's hat and making to take the parcel he carried.

"Don't bother," said Kressler. "Where's your mistress?"

"The mistress said she'd be back before you came, sir. She went to the New Burlington Art Club reception."

"Tea-party thing?" asked Kressler.

"Yes, sir, I believe so."

Kressler looked at his watch: it pointed to ten minutes past five.

"Well," he said, "you can tell her I'm in the library when she comes. See to my luggage, and have those cases of specimens put somewhere dry."

He crossed the hall, and Burden, slipping before him, opened the door of the library.

It was a pleasant room with a window giving upon the conservatory. On the centre table lay a pile of letters. Letters, circulars, seed catalogues, bulb catalogues, a monstrous pile that had already been dealt with by his secretary.

Kressler pointed to the letters.

"Shove those on the side table," said he.

Then, placing the parcel he carried on the table before him, he sat down and drew a penknife from his pocket whilst Burden closed the door.

Kressler opened the penknife and began carefully to rip the sewing of the canvas cover. This done, and the cover removed, he came upon a layer of dried moss, bound around with thin strips of bamboo. Something of the sun and mystery of the tropics seemed to emanate from the vaguely-scented bundle which Kressler now began to work upon with his knife, dividing the bamboo strips and tearing the moss apart till he reached the core—a huge bronze-coloured beetle, the wing edges bright as gold, brilliant as when alive, owing to the preservative properties of the barea moss.

Gathering the moss together, he threw the canvas cover into the fireplace. Then, turning to the table, he sat down before the beetle.

There were plenty of beetles in the packing-cases that Burden was unshipping from the taxis, but there was no beetle like this for beauty and strangeness, either in the packing-cases or the whole known world.

He repacked the thing carefully in the moss, placed it on top of a bureau by the window, and, taking his seat on a chair to rest, he fell into a momentary reverie. He saw again the sunlight of the South, smelt again the perfume of the forests, the heady, dank, dreamy smell of liantasse in swinging cables, cassi in golden flower, vanilla beans, and earth that, like a red magician, lurked behind the gorgeous arras, building trees, twisting vine cables, painting flowers, globing fruit, creating insects of the strangest pattern.

The door opened, and to the dreamer thus engaged little Mrs. Kressler came in.

She wore a broad-brimmed hat and she held the programme of the New Burlington Art Club in her hand.

II.

"MARY!" cried Kressler, rising to meet and kiss her.

"I knew I'd be late," said she. "I left in time, but the taxi broke down and I had a dispute and—oh, John, how brown you are! Let me look at you in the light—brown as a coffee-berry, and so tired-looking. Have you had tea?"

"No."

"Then come along—I've tons to tell you." She had. Over the tea-cups in the dining-room—she had ordered an egg to be boiled for his tea—she told him the kitchen chimney at Kniveton had taken it into its head to smoke; how the Lacys were going to be divorced, how Uncle George's rheumatism was, and how much she had paid a new modiste for the gown she was wearing—one-fifth of what Paquin would charge.

John listened, wiping the tea from his long moustache, and interested, despite himself and the fact that she was not talking about orchids or the Coleoptera.

Nine months in the wilder places of the earth give one an appetite for things homely and simple, and the doings of the great, even of the greatest, would have had but little appeal for Kressler, who found such interest in the doings of the sweep at Kniveton and the misdoings of the Lacys.

After tea they went to the drawing-room, where she played for him whilst he smoked a cigarette, then they had dinner, and after dinner they 'phoned for the electric brougham and went to the Gaiety.

Going to bed, Kressler peeped into the library to see that the beetle was all right; he did not lock it away, it wanted plenty of air after its journey, dry, warm air, such as that of the library. He fetched a newspaper and folded it into a sort of mattress so that air might get to the under side of his treasure:

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then, having smoked a last cigarette, he went to bed.

The most extraordinary thing about the Kresslers, or perhaps the most ordinary thing, was the fact that Mrs. Kressler existed in a different world from her husband. They lived together, laughed, walked, talked, and ate together, but they didn't think together. This little woman, who had something of the comfortable appearance of a dormouse, had scarcely an idea of the ambitus or object of Kressler's activities; he went sometimes to foreign places to collect "specimens," his orchid houses were the finest in England, he was very proud of them—this she knew, nor searched for further knowledge, content with the fact that he was a good, if sometimes absent, husband, never bothering about her commonplace doings, and allowing her seven hundred a year for pin-money.

So it came about that next morning at nine o'clock, and just after her husband had left the house for Kew on important business, Mrs. Kressler, floating into the library, and seeing some dirty-looking moss lying on an old newspaper on the bureau, and some canvas in the grate, called the housemaid, who was dusting the hall, and told her to remove them.

III.

KRESSLER came home for luncheon at one o'clock, bringing Professor Skeines with him.

Mrs. Kressler was out, attending a sale at Derry and Toms, so they had the table and the conversation to themselves, with a bottle of old Madeira.

Skeines's conversation was about as interesting as the contents of a bulb catalogue to the uninitiated, but Kressler seemed to enjoy it, even though it was not all about orchids.

He listened with seeming interest whilst Skeines pulled Professor Pullman's monograph on the *Hexandria* to pieces, pointing out with devilish derision his inclusion amongst the *Liliaceæ* of a rush that had no place there—with seeming interest, for suddenly in a pause of the talk he prised Skeines from his subject as one prises a limpet from a rock and fastened him on to the Coleoptera.

"And now I'll show you something worth seeing," said Kressler, rising from the table. He left the room, leaving the door ajar, and old Skeines, pouring out another glass of Madeira, heard him cross the hall to the library. Then he heard the voice of Kressler crying aloud for Mary, whoever Mary might be, and the voice of a female making answer:—

"The missus told me to throw it out, sir."

Skeines pricked his ears; a long silence followed the simple announcement. Then came Kressler's voice:—

"Told you to throw it out!"

"Yes, sir; that and some old stuff that was in the grate."

"Told—you—to—throw—it out! Where to?—What!—Which! Where the—where did you throw it?"

"All the rubbish goes into the dustbin, sir!"

"All the rubbish—but this was not rubbish! Can't you understand—the only golden stag in the world—Great Scot! Where's the dustbin?"

"In the area, sir, but it will have been emptied by this."

"Emptied, where?"

"Into the dust-cart, sir."

"What dust-cart?"

"The one that comes every day, sir."

"Where does it come from?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Great Scot! Great Scot!—where's Burden?"

"The missus sent him to Harrods, sir, to match some Japanese lamp shades."

"Lamps, lamp shades!—Great Scot! Does the cook know? Run down and ask her, quick; tell her what's happened—quick."

Old Skeines, vastly interested, and withal amused as one at a tragic play where the acting is perfect, poured himself out another glass of Madeira and sat listening to the uneasy footsteps in the hall.

Skeines was unmarried, and his always fair estimate of his own wisdom was not diminished either in volume or intensity by the domestic tragedy unfolding to his ears.

He thought of the *Lilium Skeinesensi* which a foolish wife might have boiled, mistaking it for an onion. Of his essay "On the relation of the stamen to the calyx as determining the poisonous nature of certain plants," of which matrimony might have made jam-pot lids.

Then suddenly came the voice of Mary.

"Please, sir, the cook says the dustman called at twelve as usual and she doesn't know where he comes from, but it's the London County Council does the work, she believes, and——"

"Where's my hat?"

"Here, sir."

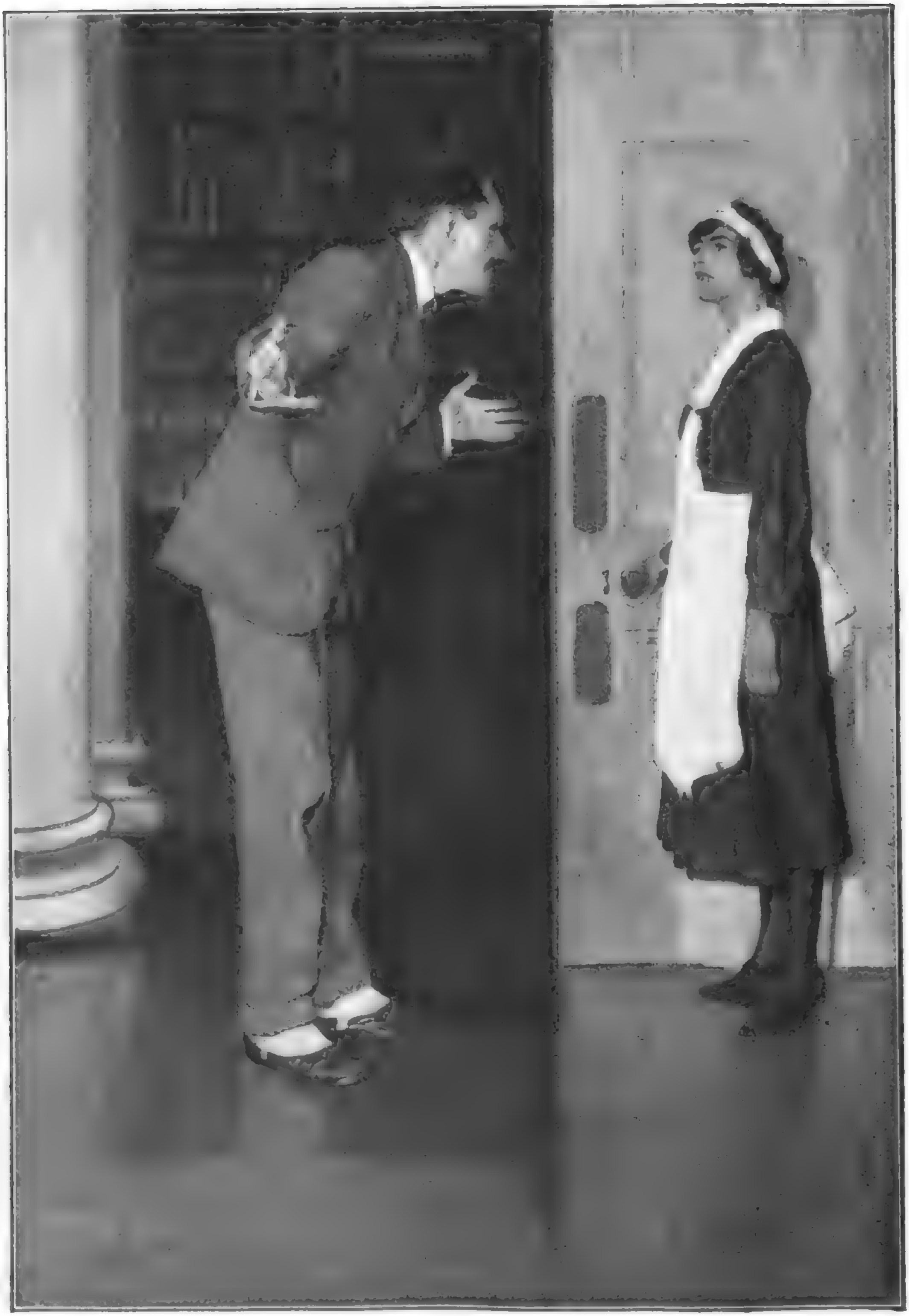
Skeines heard the hall door opened, a passing taxi being hailed, Kressler's voice crying "Spring Gardens," and the hall door shut.

He was not annoyed at being forgotten in this manner by his host—he knew him too well. He finished the Madeira, smoked a cigarette, and then he, too, departed.

IV.

IT was not till four o'clock on the following day that Kressler returned home for good. After definite knowledge of the fruitlessness of his quest had come the recognition of defeat and a feeling of

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"'All the rubbish goes into the dustbin, sir.' 'All the rubbish—but this was not rubbish! Can't you understand——'"

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abandonment. He had dined at his club, reviewing—as he ate the food he could not taste—the men he had interviewed, high officials and dustmen, the things he had seen, from dust carts to dust destructors, and the great fact that his quest was hopeless. He drifted into the Alhambra, and returned home at one o'clock in the morning. He listened to the easy breathing, speaking of the sleep of the just, that came from his wife's bedroom, then he stole off to his own room, and after early breakfast next morning, started for Richmond, where Skeines lived.

He did not want to meet his wife. He dreaded what he might say. He recognized that it was not all her fault, not her fault that she had been born with a mind destitute of interest in the things that really mattered, a commonplace frivolous mind—yet he did not want to meet her. He did not want to think of her. If she had destroyed the thing in a temper he might have forgiven her more easily than he could forgive her for this passionless, stupid crime, born of want of interest in his aspirations and doings.

Luncheon with Skeines and a blow in the Park, however, had a cooling effect, and by the time of his return home, about four o'clock, he was not only able to think calmly about his wife, but he was actually anxious to meet her. To meet her and punish her, by telling her exactly what she had done and in language that a child could understand.

"The mistress is in the drawing-room, sir," said Burden.

She was. Placid and content. Tea had just been brought in, and as Kressler entered she was in the act of pouring out a cup. Calm, and evidently without any sense of special wrong-doing.

"John," said Mrs. Kressler, as though suddenly remembering, "I'm so sorry. Mary tells me that old thing you left in the library and that old canvas in the grate oughtn't to have been thrown out—I told her to——"

"I know," said Kressler. "It was a beetle—there's no use in bothering about it —two lumps, please."

He took his cup and sat down, and Mrs. Kressler, nothing loth, turned the conversation in another direction. She knew nothing of the wild incidents of yesterday; Mary had simply said that the master had seemed put out. He still seemed put out, so she started to draw him away from himself with light gossip and with such apparent success that she was surprised when, tea being over, Kressler, returning to the subject like the Biblical dog, said :—

"I want to talk to you, Mary, about that thing; sit down here beside me on the sofa. I want to tell you the story of it so that you may see what it meant to me."

"Yes, dear," said Mrs. Kressler. Fetching the half-knitted jumper she was at work on, she sat down beside him on the broad comfortable sofa, and he began.

V.

"YOU remember, or maybe you don't remember, that before starting I had engaged a collector to meet me at Rangoon."

"I remember something about that," said Mrs. Kressler, "because you got so angry with me when I asked you what he was going to collect."

"If I got angry," said Kressler, "it was simply because the fact was obvious that the expedition being in search of new specimens of certain endogenous plants grouped under the name Orchidaceæ and certain new forms of life, we were going to collect those, if possible. Well, I met this man at Rangoon. Simmonds was his name. I had engaged him on good credentials; an hour's conversation with him confirmed them. Here was no hired collector—would you mind putting those knitting needles aside, dear, their movements rather interrupt me ?—here was no man paid for doing a job; here was a man with a passionate attachment to his subject, a man whose life had been spent in the wilder places of the world in pursuit of science. He was a remarkable man, even in personal appearance, not unlike Burden in figure and face, if one can imagine Burden with an intellect and some inches shorter in stature; but the thing that struck me most was his head. It was very large, quite enormous, making him a subject of ridicule, indeed, to boys and dull-witted persons.

"He had already obtained for me an option upon a schooner of sixty tons, the *Madras*, owned by a Dutch gentleman of the name of Papenhayne, resident in Rangoon; having inspected her I signed the contract for a year's hire. A week later we had obtained our crew, and the provisions and water having been brought on board, we started, shaping our course for Borneo.

"One might ask me, 'Why pass the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, those well-known haunts of the orchid ?' and I would reply 'Over-done.' Robbed by innumerable collectors of the rarer specimens, these islands, small in area, are over-done. Simmonds well knew that, and, led by his sagacity, we discarded the obvious, steering, as I said, for Borneo.

"Reaching Sarawak we put in to Igan, which is situated on a bend of the Rejang river. Between here and Muka we made our hunting-ground, and here, led by Simmonds, I secured a rich harvest. Half the contents of those packing-cases. Think of it, in that small tract of country disdained by

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collectors I secured all those, simply because I was led by a man of knowledge and genius."

"It's something like shopping, isn't it ?" said Mrs. Kressler. "Sometimes in side streets you find shops that are much better and cheaper than the big shops—if you know the ropes."

"Just so," said Kressler, pleased at this sudden flash of intelligence in his spouse. "Simmonds knew the ropes, as you put it, and, having exhausted this piece of country, we re-embarked and set sail for Sandal Wood Island in the Sunda group. It is quite a small island, but very rich in its flora and fauna and strangely neglected by collectors, and having secured a fairly good haul, we left for Mallicollo, in the New Hebrides, stopping there only for water and leaving the next day for a small island to the south which Simmonds had marked down, and where our luck still held good. We spent a fortnight there, and on the eve of our departure for Suva Simmonds made a proposition to me.

"It seems that somewhere about a year before a Dutchman named Van Horne had given him information of the possibilities of Malaita in the Solomon Islands. Van Horne was a collector, and he had marked down a special bay to the west of Malaita where the woods were extraordinarily rich. The only difficulty was the natives. The natives of Malaita are head-hunters to a man; crafty, subtle, and sly, they are the most dangerous people in the Eastern world. Civilization has never really touched them. They are cannibals, but they kill really less for food than for the strange passion that has come down to them from immemorial times, the passion for securing and collecting heads. Head lust, one might call it.

"Well, Simmonds proposed to me that we should sail for Malaita and, risking the natives, explore the woods spoken of by Van Horne. Such was his devotion to me, that, though he was only my paid agent who could have chosen safe places, he put every personal consideration aside—you quite appreciate that fact, don't you ?"

"Yes—go on," said Mrs. Kressler, nestling close to him as if for protection against the head-hunters. "I quite see, they'd want to get his head, wouldn't they ?—you said it was so big."

"I wasn't thinking of that—I meant risk of life. He was ready to risk his life for my sake and for the sake of the objects of our search. You see that clearly ?"

"Yes, quite."

"WELL, I accepted his suggestion, after due consideration, and next day we set sail for Malaita, favoured by fine weather, and in due course we arrived at the bay indicated by Van Horne. It was a narrow bay protected by a reef and backed by dense groves of coco-nuts, pandanus, bread-fruit, and other tropical trees, but sign of natives there was none. Everything seemed in our favour, and then, all of a sudden, bad luck came, for on the morning after our arrival I was troubled by an attack of fever. I must have taken it at Mallicollo. However that may be, it quite prostrated me, and, despite large doses of quinine, I was helpless and unable to land. Then it was that Simmonds showed himself again in his true colours. He determined to go ashore alone, taking with him two Kanakas we had picked up at Mallicollo. I pointed out to him the risk attending the landing of such a small party, but he was quite determined, and I was too weak to argue with him. So he went, taking provisions sufficient for three or four days, an automatic pistol, and the tin collecting box which he always carried slung across his shoulder by a strap.

"On the evening of the next day one of the Kanakas returned, hailing the ship from the beach. A boat put off for him, and he came on board bearing a note from Simmonds. The note briefly stated that he had discovered what he called the wonder of the world, the golden stag he called it—a beetle absolutely unknown to science. He gave a short description, and finished by saying that he was pushing farther into the woods and would return on the following day. You can fancy my feelings. The fever quite left me. I was myself again. My appetite came back, and that night I slept soundly, though dreaming, indeed, the most splendid dream, in which I walked with my friend amongst groves where the flora was of almost impossible beauty. Next day I could scarcely rest watching the beach for his return, but evening came and passed and night fell without a sign of him. Next morning was the same. No sign; the day passed and night was falling when a hail from the beach reached us, but it was not Simmonds.

"It was Ramua, the second Kanaka, returned without his master. When we got him on board he was too exhausted to speak, then, after a while, when we had given him some food and brandy, he recovered enough to be able to tell his tale.

"He said that shortly after leaving us they had struck a part of the forest where 'Master with the big head,' that was the name he employed, speaking in the native, had expressed great joy over an insect which he had collected, and placed it in his tin box. He had sent the other Kanaka back with a note to me, and then he and Ramua had pushed on, seeking more things but finding little of importance, though, indeed, the forest was filled with plants and insects not inferior in

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"'Yes—go on,' said Mrs. Kressler, nestling close to him as if for protection."

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looks to the one which had given his master such delight.

"Of course, I knew at once the truth, that Simmonds, as so often happens after a big find, had struck the commonplace again, and, spurred by his first success, had pushed on farther and farther. Ramua's narrative bore me out. Simmonds had indeed pushed on, making towards the north so as to avoid the hills, and that night, as they slept, he and Ramua had been seized by natives, bound,and carried captive to a village situated in a clearing and close to the shore.

"Ramua on the way had managed to loosen his bonds, and, struggling free of them, had broken away and escaped. He could not tell what the natives had done to Simmonds, whether they had killed him or whether he still lived. He had made his way back to the ship by that beast instinct common to primitive man, and he declared, on being questioned, that he could find the village again if I cared to lead a relief expedition and take him as guide.

"OF course, I determined on that course of action at once. There were seven of us. Myself, Masters, the captain of the schooner, three sailors, one of whom acted as bo'sun, and the two Kanakas. We had four repeating rifles and four revolvers on board, and plenty of ammunition; these we collected, with enough provisions to last us four days, and, having given Ramua six hours in which to rest himself and sleep, we started just as day was breaking beyond the hills.

"We landed without opposition or difficulty, and, leaving a man behind to take the boat back to the schooner and keep watch, we struck inland, led by Ramua, through a forest where the cable lianas swung overhead, and the tree tops, moving in the land breeze that had just sprung up, showed the sky lit with morning.

"As the light grew stronger I could see what a paradise for the collector this was likely to be, but, filled as my mind was with the fate of Simmonds, I was blind to the possibilities around me. I had but one idea, to push on.

"At noon we halted for a rest and some food, and two hours later we resumed the march, Ramua still leading with the unerring instinct of a dog, till we reached a part of the forest where only bread-fruit grew, interspersed with great patches of the Mammee apple.

"Here Ramua called a halt and whispered that we were within earshot of the village.

"It was just sundown and darkness was coming through the trees. He said that our plan was to wait a few hours till the moon rose, then, the village being asleep, we could prospect the place, free Simmonds if he were still alive, perhaps without giving the alarm, or, if necessary, attack the place with better chance of success in the moonlight than we would have now that dusk was full upon us. He said that if they intended killing Simmonds they would have done so by this. We fell in with his plan and, lying down, rested ourselves whilst darkness came on and the forest turned black with night.

"Presently a faint green light began to glow above us. It was the light of the rising moon. It grew stronger and, as it grew, the whisper came from Ramua that it was time for us to move. I ordered the men to look to their arms, see that their spare ammunition was all right, and walk softly; then, following Ramua in single file, we moved off.

"It was easy going, and the ground, covered by a growth of low fern between the Mammee apples and the bread-fruit tracts, gave no sound to our footsteps. Ten minutes passed, then, Ramua halting, we spread out and, peeping through the bushes, saw the native village in its clearing, the moon full upon the grass-thatched huts and, full in the moonlight in the open space around which the huts were grouped, a little fire burning and sending its smoke to the sky.

"Three sticks in the form of a tripod were placed over the fire and from them something hung on a string, twirling in the smoke. Beside the fire squatted an old man feeding the flickering flames with dried leaves and bits of tinder, the smoke rising in volumes at every handful so that sometimes the thing that was being smoked was invisible. Not another soul was in sight; the village slept well and soundly, and the reason of its sleep was evident in the embers of a greater fire just dying out and the bones around it. The village was gorged.

"Ramua, who was beside me, plucked my sleeve, pointed out the old man by the fire and whispered: 'Devil-devil doctor.' Then he held up a finger and whispered: 'Wait!'

"He rose, slipped away through the trees, and presently returned with something in his hands. It was a fathom of tough ground liana as thick as whipcord. Then, holding up his finger again, he glided away. Presently he reappeared in the full moonlight, crossing the open space like a ghost, towards the old man, approaching him from behind.

"The devil-doctor heard and saw nothing. Then suddenly the liana was round his neck, twisted tight, and he was lying on the ground kicking, and, in a moment, dead. Not a cry had broken the stillness of the night to alarm the village, nothing but just the faint sound of the old man's brief struggle that might have been the sound of a bush pig in the undergrowth.

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"Then Ramua removed the thing that was hanging from the tripod and picked up something that lay beside the body of the devil-doctor, something that shone in the moonlight. It was Simmonds's collecting box—the other thing, which he had removed from the tripod, was Simmonds's head.

"Coming back to us bearing these things, one in each hand, he whispered us to follow him, and striking through the trees we left the sleeping village behind us, reaching the beach as dawn was breaking and setting sail an hour later.

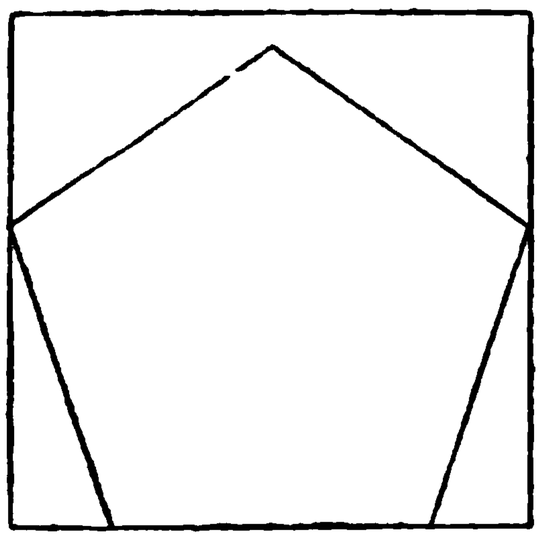
"We buried the remains of my friend at sea, and the golden stag for which he had risked his life—for which he gave his life—went to a London dustbin. To a London dust destructor; that is all I wanted to tell you—now you know."

Kressler paused, but Mrs. Kressler said nothing. The cruel fatality of the whole business seemed to have stricken her dumb as she sat there, her head reclining against his shoulder. Kressler, half-shocked with the effect of his revelation, looked down at her face—she was asleep!

PERPLEXITIES. By Henry E. Dudeney.

579.—FOLDING A PENTAGON.

I AM reminded of my promise in the issue for last June to present another puzzle in paper folding of a rather more difficult character than the Hexagon example that we then considered. Let us, then, try our hands at this. If you are given a perfectly square piece of paper, how are you to fold it so as to indicate by creases a regular pentagon, as in our illustration, all ready to be cut out? Remember that you must use your fingers alone, without any instrument or measure whatever.



580.—EXPLORING MOUNT NEVEREST.

PROFESSOR WALKINGHOLME, one of the exploring party, was allotted the special task of making a complete circuit of the base of the mountain at a certain level. The circuit was exactly 100 miles in length and he had to do it all alone on foot. He could walk 20 miles a day, but he could only carry rations for two days at a time, the rations for each day being packed in sealed boxes for convenience in dumping. He walked his full 20 miles every day and consumed one day's ration as he walked. What is the shortest time in which he could complete the circuit? This simple question will be found to form one of the most fascinating puzzles that we have considered for some time. It made a considerable demand on Professor Walkingholme's well-known ingenuity. The reader who can find the correct solution may congratulate himself. The idea was suggested to me by Mr. H. F. Heath.

581.—TIMING THE MOTOR-CAR.

"I WAS walking along the road at three and a half miles an hour," said Mr. Pipkins, "when the motor-car dashed past me and only missed me by a few inches."

"Do you know at what speed it was going?" asked his friend.

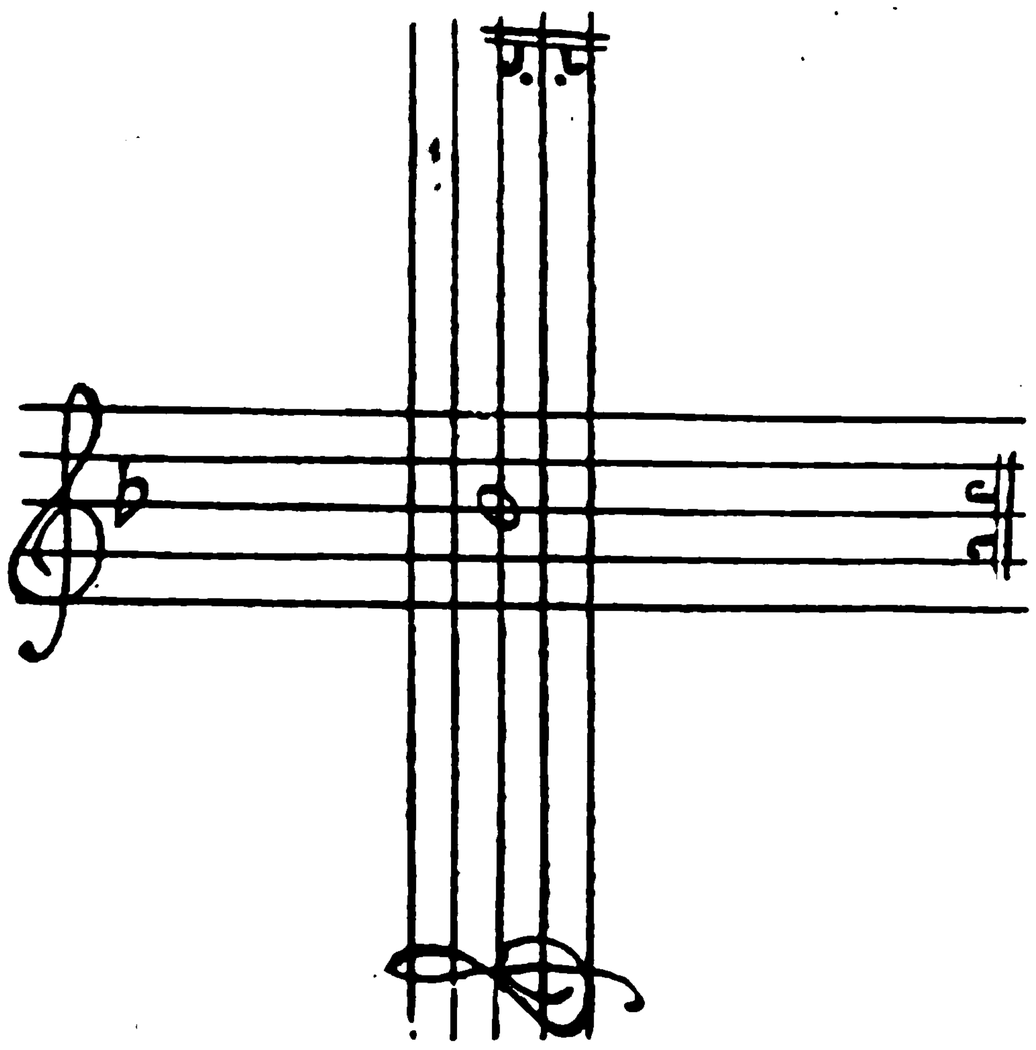
"Well, from the moment it passed me to its disappearance round a corner I took twenty-seven steps, and walking on reached that corner with one hundred and thirty-five steps more."

"Then, assuming that you walked, and the car ran, each at a uniform rate, we can easily work out the speed."

What was the answer? This is a good trap for the youthful arithmetician, who will imagine all sorts of difficulties, such as the unknown length of the man's steps, but it is absurdly simple when properly grasped.

582.—A MUSICAL ENIGMA.

HERE is an old musical enigma sent to me by a correspondent ("K. L."). The solution is not known, and I have not hit on it. Perhaps readers can make



some suggestions. I give it as received in facsimile, and assume that the omission of the flat in the vertical clef is intentional. My correspondent's old copy is in violet ink, which may not be material to a solution, but had better be mentioned.

583.—A NEW ALPHABET PUZZLE.

IT was shown (in our issue for May, 1918) that a sentence may be formed from the twenty-six letters of the alphabet and only two repeated letters. One of the examples given was BLOWZY FRIGHTS VEX AND JUMP QUICK, where the U and I are repeated. It has been suggested to me to form words (not necessarily a sentence) by using as many letters of the alphabet as possible (no repetitions), and it is obvious that by striking out the word QUICK above and substituting DANK for AND we get a solution with only the letters C and Q omitted. Can you form words with only a single letter dropped?

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SOLUTIONS TO THE PUZZLE CRANKS' SYMPOSIUM.

REDUCTIONS IN PRICE.

It is evident that the salesman's rule was to take off three-eighths of the price at every reduction. Therefore, to be consistent, the motor-car should be offered at £78 2s. 6d. after the next reduction.

SOME WORD PUZZLES.

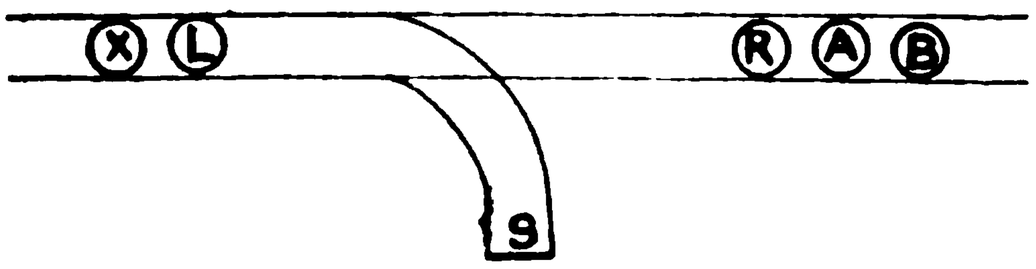
The first word is SKILL—KILL—ILL, and the second TELEGRAPH. Mr. Wingleford's last question is answered by POSTMAN, for no matter how many letters you may take from him he still remains a postman.

THE CIRCULATING MOTOR-CAR.

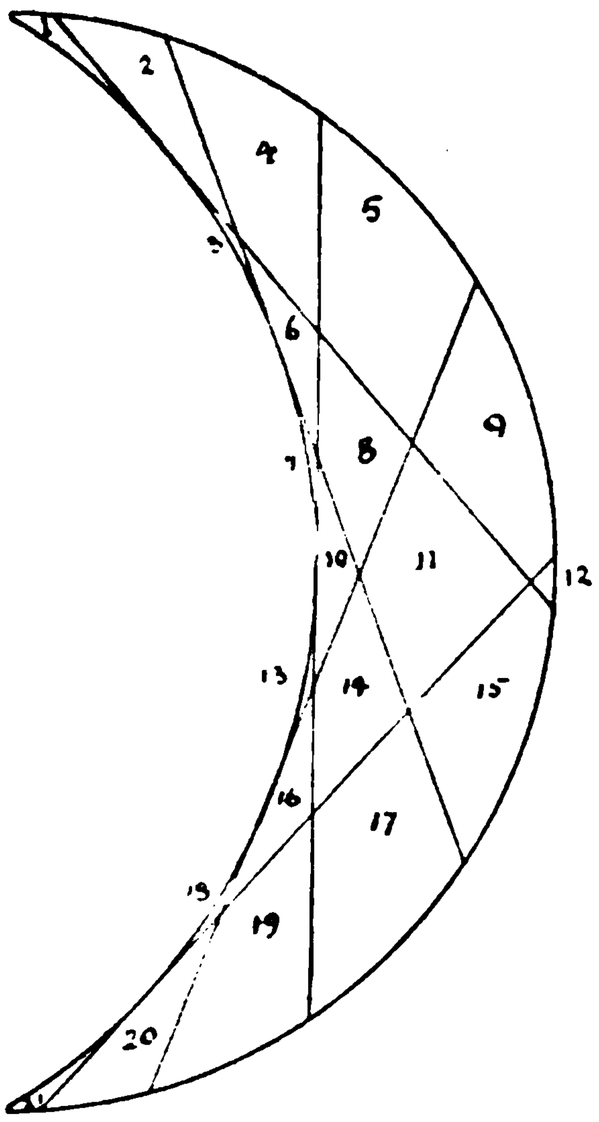
As the outside wheels went twice as fast as the inside ones the circle they described was twice the length of the inner circle. Therefore one circle had twice the diameter of the other, and, since the wheels were 5 feet apart, the diameter of the larger circle was 20 feet. Multiply 20 feet by 3·1416 (the familiar approximate value for "pi") and we get 62·832 feet as the length of the circumference of the larger circle.

RAILWAY SHUNTING.

Make a rough sketch like our diagram and use five counters marked X, L, R, A, and B. The engines are L and R, and the two cars on the right A and B. The three cars on the left are never separated, so we call them X. The side track is marked S. Now, play as follows: L to S, R A B to left (as far as necessary),



L off S to left, A B L to right, R to S, A B L to left, X A B L to right, R off S to left, R to right, R X A to left, R takes A to S, R X to left, R X to right, R to left, R to A, R A to left, R A to right, R A X B to left, R takes B to S, R A X to left, R A X to right, R A to left, R A to B, and both trains right away. There are thus 24 moves, but first two moves involve no change of direction, so number of moves according to conditions is 22. The last move, "trains right away," does require a change of direction on the part of R.



DISSECTING THE MOON.

The illustration shows that the five cuts can be so cunningly made as to produce as many as twenty-one pieces.

A POLISH GAMBLE.

At the start of play Wobblestaff put £260 on the table, the Baron £80, and the Count £140. After the three games it will be found that each player was left with £160 and Wobblestaff had lost £100.

PAWNS AGAINST PIECES.

1. P takes Kt (*a*) and P takes Q P, ch. (*b*), 1. R takes P; 2. P to R 6 and P to R 7. 2. P to Q Kt 3 (*c*); 3. P to R 8 (Q) and Q to R 6, ch., 3. K to B 2; 4. Q takes Kt P and Q to R 7, ch., 4. B to Kt 2 (*d*); 5. Q takes B and Q to Kt 5, 5. Q to K 8, ch. (*e*); 6. K to B sq. and K takes Q, 6. R to K 2, ch; 7. Q to K 2 and Q takes R, ch., etc. (*f*).

(*a*) 1. P takes Q would be fatal to White's chance of winning. (*b*) P takes Kt P would also be bad for White. (*c*) If 4. Q to R 7; 5. P to R 8 (Q) and Q takes Q. (*d*) If Black K moved, 5. Q takes R and Q takes Q! (*e*) If Q to Kt 5, ch.; 6. P to R 3 and P takes Q! (*f*) It will be seen that if White once gets a Q and can hold it for one move the game of Black is invariably hopeless. And Black in the position given could not prevent White queening. There are slightly better last moves on both sides, but I have selected those that afford instructive examples of play. In no case could Black save the game.

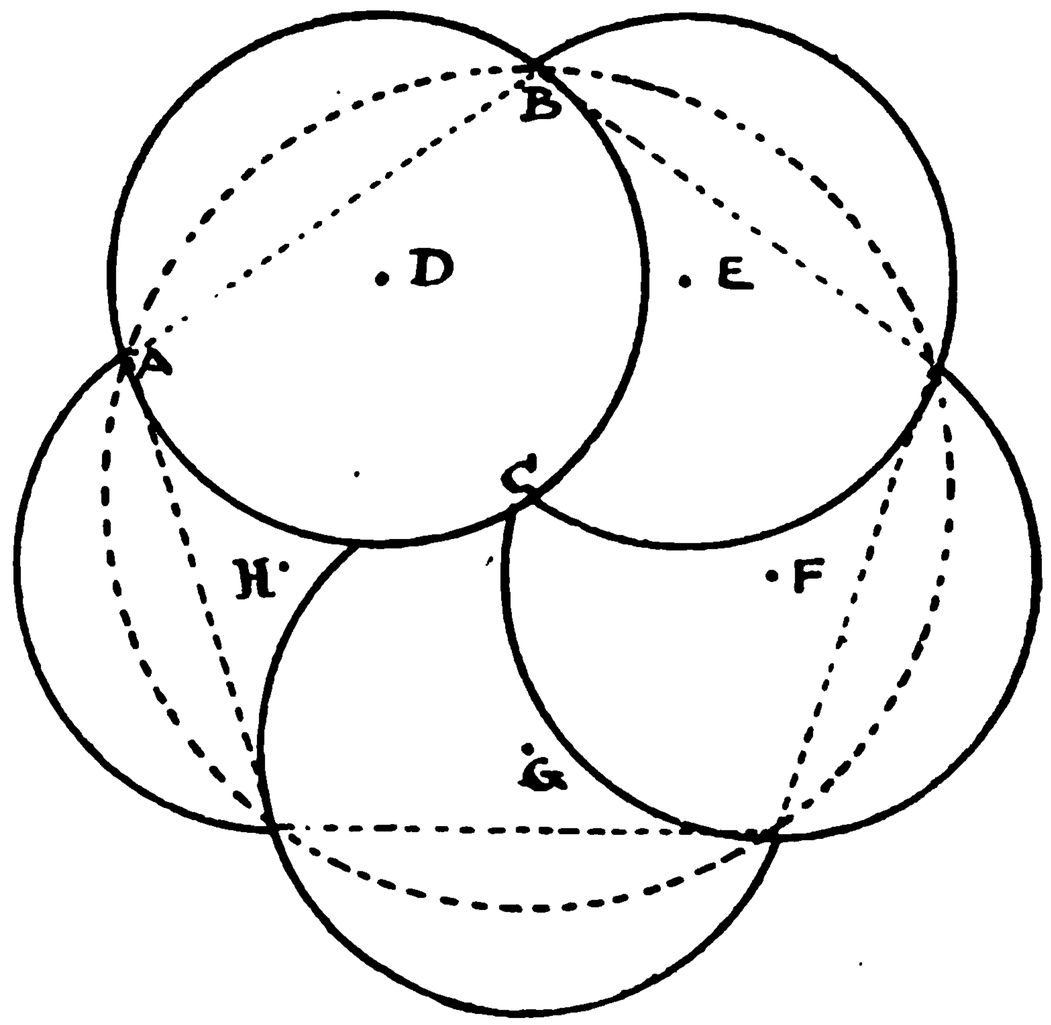
BRUIN GOES SHOPPING.

What the bear wanted was muslin'.

A CURIOUS LEGACY.

As it is evident that Catherine, Jane, and Mary received respectively £122, £132, and £142, making together the £396 left to the three wives, if John Smith receives as much as his wife Catherine, £122; Henry Snooks half as much again as his wife Jane, £198; and Tom Crow twice as much as his wife Mary, £284: we have correctly paired these married couples and exactly accounted for the £1,000.

THE CIRCLE AND DISCS.



In our diagram the dotted lines represent the circumference of the red circle and an inscribed pentagon. The centre of both is C. Find D, a point equidistant from A, B, and C, and with radius A D draw the circle A B C. Five discs of this size will cover the circle if placed with their centres at D, E, F, G, and H. If the diameter of the large circle is 6 inches, the diameter of the discs is a little less than 4 inches, or 4 inches "to the nearest half-inch." It requires a little care and practice correctly to place the five discs without shifting, unless you make some secret markings that would not be noticed by others.

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RAFFLES IN VIENNA

by

JOSEPH GOLLOMB

ILLUSTRATED BY E·VERPILLEUX

IF you read the story of Hugo Breitwisser in the dry records of the Vienna police, as I glanced at it, you would find no mention of him as Robin Hood, the gallant outlaw of Sherwood Forest who robbed the rich to give to the poor. But if you were to hear the story, as I heard it, from the lips of Inspector Johann Rapp, the simple policeman who has made the Crime Museum of the Vienna police both an art collection and a marvellous school for hunters of criminals, you would feel the thrill of his picture of both Robin Hood and Raffles coming to life in one man and living in himself the best stories you had read about them.

We were standing in the room of burglar exhibits in the Crime Museum, Inspector Rapp and I, when he turned to a specially-constructed case full of some sort of paraphernalia.

"It is the tool-chest of Hugo Breitwisser," Inspector Rapp said, proudly. "He was the Edison of burglars, the Robin Hood of the modern world, the Raffles of fiction come to life. He drew on fiction for his life, and in the living improved on fiction. When he was killed two years ago he was only twenty-eight. Had he lived ten more years such as he lived since leaving the university, his name would ring round the world and go down in romance as the super-burglar in all history. But—judge for yourself.

"He was the son of cultured parents of excellent reputation," he went on. "How he came to shoot off on his tangent of crime you must ask whatever powers create the genius and the monster. Even as a stripling Hugo knew what his career was to be. He had read of Robin Hood, and he found his hero. I don't mean to say that if he hadn't come across the story of Robin Hood he would have stayed a good citizen. No, the character and destiny of the man were there early in life, and he planned his career with the same care, detail, and thought that his fond parents devoted to preparing him for mechanical engineering.

"Indeed, it was at his own urging that he was sent to the University of Gratz to study engineering. Not that he wanted to learn the profession for itself. But he knew it would give him considerable training in tool-making, knowledge of tensile strength of metals, or the construction of vaults and safes, of the action of acids and gases on iron and steel. You see, he was going to college to study burglary; and he was planning his own college course. It is the only case I have ever heard of a criminal preparing for his profession in the same way that a lawyer or a doctor prepares for theirs.

"His single-mindedness as a young man in the university was that of a genius. He took lessons in wrestling and 'jiu-jitsu,' just as young policemen learn these things—and for the opposite reasons. He kept away from dissipation because it took off the edge of keenness of nerve and mind. He 'clubbed' and made friends with all sorts of men, because it is with all sorts of men that a super-criminal would have to deal.

"One day during a hard winter soon after Breitwisser left the university a big coal dealer was visited in his office by a decorously-dressed, serious-minded young man.

"'I am the secretary of a gentleman of

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considerable means,' the visitor said. 'He is moved by the plight of the poor this winter. There are leeches of coal dealers who take this opportunity of raising the price of fuel to prohibitive prices——'

"'What do you want?' the coal dealer interrupted him, sharply. His prices were highest of all.

"'My employer wishes to distribute a large quantity of coal to the poor. But he wants to remain anonymous. So if your prices are reasonable I am empowered to order from you. You will also have to furnish a list of about one thousand names and addresses of the poorest people in the city and deliver the coal in your wagons. For all this you will be paid in cash.'

"The coal dealer stared. But, smarting under the characterization of 'leech,' he began by asking the top price. To his great astonishment and delight, the young man accepted, and gave him a large order, paying for it in crisp new bills. The only conditions imposed were that deliveries were to be made at once, and that no effort would be made to find out who the anonymous donor was.

"The joyful merchant gladly accepted them and proceeded to carry them out at top speed. All day and night hundreds of poor families were roused to find sacks of coal dumped down on their thresholds, sent, as they were told, by some unknown lover of the poor. The next day the newspapers were full of the handsome charity.

"THE other item that filled the newspapers that day was an account of a highly successful burglary of the coal merchant's safe the night before. All the money he had received from the 'secretary of the anonymous benefactor of the poor' had been taken, and another sum in addition. The two events, united apparently by accident, stirred the public. The police found the burglary an extraordinarily skilful performance, with not a trace as to who had done it.

"It would have remained a complete mystery to this day had not the newspapers received, a few days later, copies of an anonymous note. It read: —

"'What I took from the safe of coal-dealer Metz on Monday night was largely my own money, which I had paid him that day for deliveries of coal to the poor. The sum above that was the ten per cent. I paid myself out of his money for the trouble of making a leech disgorge the blood he had sucked from the veins of the poor.—ROBIN HOOD.'

"It was not till several years later," continued Inspector Rapp, "that we found in Hugo Breitwisser the man who had robbed the coal dealer and befriended the poor. But from the day of the appearance of the note in the newspapers his deeds began to fill the imagination of the public.

"As for the police, we began to see in a whole series of expert burglaries the work of some one man. Thanks largely to Professor Gross and his school of criminologists, we soon learned a great deal about this master-burglar's methods. But we did not, could not, keep up with his new ones. No sooner did we solve one method of his—and each one was in advance of those used by other burglars—than he developed something new. It was usually his own invention—a specially effective explosive, a sensitive device to register the working of the tumblers of safes too strong to blow up, or a gas torch of irresistible power.

"But we were helped by Breitwisser himself. He confined himself almost exclusively to robbing notorious exploiters of the poor; and almost immediately after each robbery whole districts of poverty-stricken people would receive gifts of food, clothing, and fuel, or, most frequently of all, money. All this gave us plenty of clues in our hunt, and several times the police of Vienna caught glimpses of him.

"But it was a serious matter for some of them. Hugo Breitwisser had learned from the American criminal a great readiness to shoot when cornered. The first time this happened was when we had laid a trap for him. We 'planted' a story in the newspaper that a certain wholesale butcher, who had the reputation of being a hard creditor, had just closed a big deal with the Government and had bought a lot of jewellery in celebration.

"For two weeks we had our men hidden every night on the premises of this dealer. One night Breitwisser came. We did not know he had effected an entrance into the house until he was actually in the room where the safe was. It was pitch dark. Our first intimation that he was there was the sight of a tiny electric light moving about the room. Two of our men hurled themselves at what we thought would be the man behind the light. Our hands only found a long, slender collapsible rod, with Breitwisser himself somewhere six feet behind it.

"By the time one of our men found the switch and turned on the lights Breitwisser was at the window. As it was three storeys above the ground, with nothing to break the leap, they thought surely they had him. So our men jumped for him, not thinking it necessary to shoot. But he had a revolver in his hand, and shot down two of our men, killing one and mortally wounding another. What we did not know—and he did—was that at the window there was a patent rope fire-escape. Before we could seize him he had jumped from the window, the end of the rope about himself.

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"With the chain as a weapon, Breitwisser knocked the sentry unconscious."

"He landed safely—but in the arms of our men. They talk to this day of the terrific fight he put up. Nevertheless, they landed him in jail that night. They had caught 'Robin Hood' at last.

"The newspapers were full of him next day and for two weeks thereafter, while he was awaiting trial for robbery and murder. With what we thought pardonable vanity, he asked for copies of every newspaper that said anything about him. He got them; and the prison keepers thought it not at all curious that he should want to keep them all.

"But one day his cell was found empty. Somehow or other he had concealed a phial of some acid, with which he had burned away the end of one of his window bars and twisted it so that it gave him an opening. Hanging from the other bars was found a rope—of paper. He had so twisted a lot of newspapers that they formed a continuous rope, tied with strings of mattress-covering, so that the paper did not untwist again. Once on the ground, he made good his escape."

It seemed incredible, what Inspector Rapp was telling me. But he turned to the Breitwisser exhibit, and there was the "rope" itself. Like the egg which Columbus caused to stand on end, it seemed a simple matter once you saw it.

"Soon afterwards the war broke out," Inspector Rapp continued. "In the great tumult Breitwisser was almost forgotten. But one day a squad of hunters for army evaders caught him in their net. They didn't know who he was, and thought him an ordinary slacker. So they took only ordinary precautions. He escaped from the military prison with ridiculous ease.

"But in a land where every able-bodied young man was in the army it was difficult

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for Breitwisser to remain hidden. Besides, there was always in the man a hardihood, a thirst for adventure, a love of thrill that tempted him into danger. So that he was captured again by the military authorities, this time known as a deserter.

"He was put in chains, and after a speedy court-martial sentenced to be shot. An hour before the firing squad came for him Breitwisser hung the chain that bound his hands and legs in one strand on a hook in the wall. He then turned and manœuvred until the chain was twisted tight. Somehow he managed to endure the agony as the twisted chain dug into his wrist. And with a final whirl he put such a strain on the twist that a weak link snapped—and Breitwisser's hands were loose.

"He called out as though in pain. The sentry came into the cell, thinking Breitwisser was still bound. With the chain as a weapon, Breitwisser knocked the sentry unconscious. Wrapped in the sentry's great-coat, the young devil stole into the prison yard, and lay hidden for days in a pile of scrap material. At that time our army was breaking under a sudden offensive of the Russians. In the general preoccupation that followed he escaped—and we heard no more of him until the great climax to his story.

"The war ended with Austria prostrate. But, as vultures prey on prostrate bodies, so poor Austria has suffered from *schieber*—profiteers, who made swollen fortunes from illegal trading in food. One of these—let us call him Schwartz—made the acquaintance of a dashing young artillery officer. He thought the meeting accidental. It wasn't. It was of Breitwisser's planning.

"He had planned it, inspired by the character of the English gentleman-burglar of fiction—Raffles. The officer, who called himself Reinhard, was an exceedingly charming fellow and a gay companion. Schwartz, like all the newly-rich, didn't know how to play enjoyably, and was most anxious to learn. Reinhard was a genius at playing. So Schwartz became a most eager pupil.

"It was at Reinhard's suggestion that Schwartz gave a gay costume party at his house. The young officer, with characteristic boldness and imagination, chose to dress as Robin Hood, in doublet and hose of Lincoln green. The party, consisting of other profiteers and their female friends, proceeded to get as drunk as only such a crowd can.

"Reinhard took his host aside. 'Some of your friends are getting to be a little—well, exhilarated. If any of them should lose their jewellery while dancing it would not be at all pleasant. Why don't you suggest to them, while they are still sober, that they let you put their jewels away in your safe?'

"Schwartz thought this a good idea, and so did his friends. They were all a bit timid, anyway, as people with uneasy consciences are. So into Schwartz's competent safe went their jewellery and pocket-books. And into the room where the safe was wandered Reinhard, clad in Lincoln green, a little more than staggering, singing at the top of his voice the current *cabaret* favourite. The servants thought nothing of it—he had been living with Schwartz for some days, and had the free run of the house.

"But once inside the room, Reinhard, without stopping his singing, lost his stagger. Going to Schwartz's bed—it was the profiteer's own bedroom—Reinhard dragged out the mattress. From Schwartz's own cupboard he took out a complete set of paraphernalia, which he had devised after a study of the wall safe. Shoving his black mask over his forehead and adjusting his other mask of steel and glass, he blew holes in the steel door with his torch. Never for a moment, however, did he stop singing—or was 'shouting' the better word?

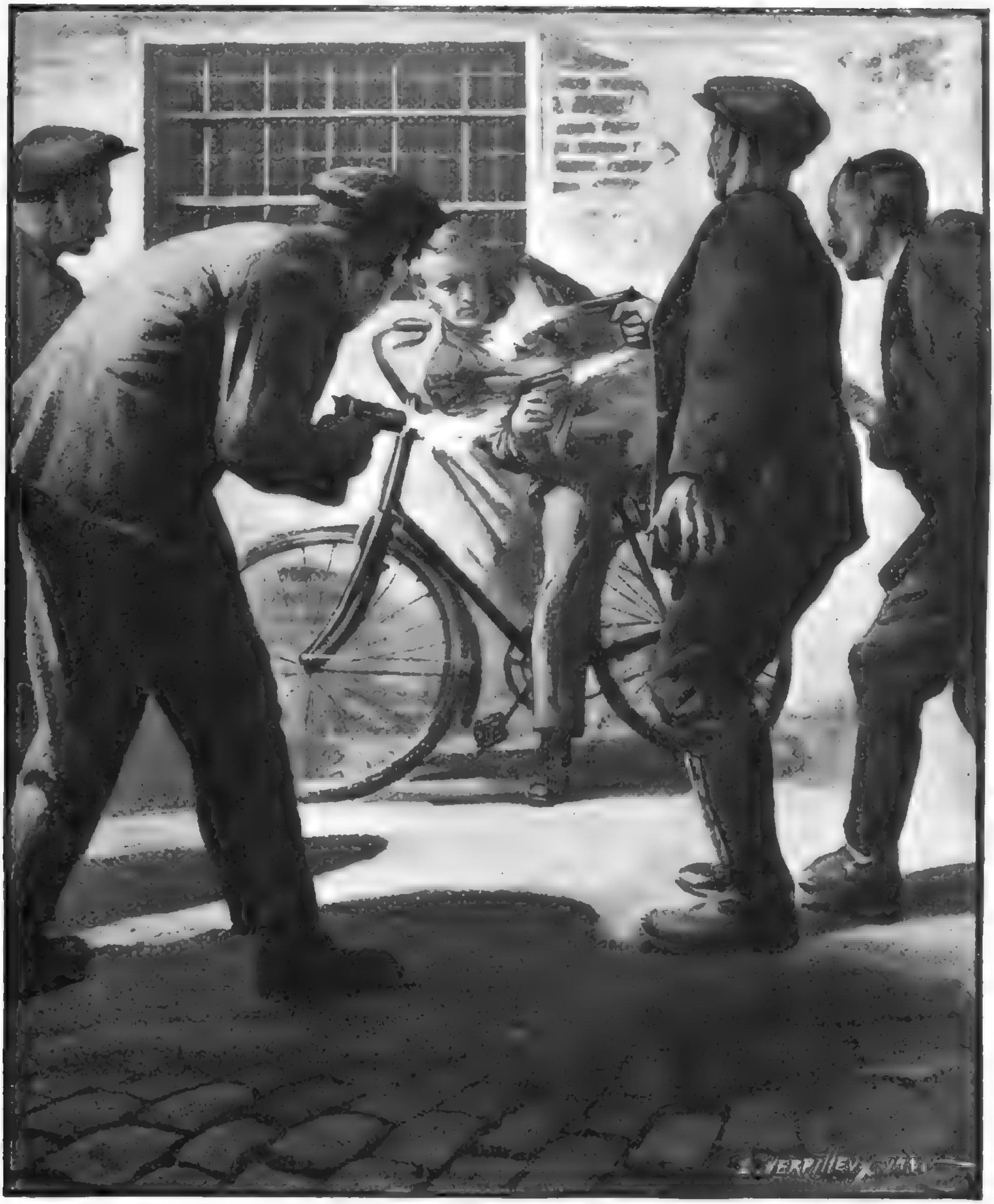
"Into the holes he stuffed his most improved explosive. With Schwartz's own mattress he muffled the explosion. Five minutes later, when he emerged again, staggering, and re-entered the ballroom, there was over twenty thousand pounds' worth of jewels stuffed in his Robin Hood wallet. Soon after he drifted out of the crowd and was gone."

AS Inspector Rapp spoke I was sure I caught a note of admiration, almost liking, for the romantic young robber he was describing; and there seemed to me something like regret as he told of the close of his career.

"With the proceeds of the haul," he went on, "Breitwisser retired into hiding. He took a house in a small village and quietly fitted it up to his needs and tastes. To begin with, he had accumulated a good library—the man was a passionate reader. Little by little the books found their way into the fine room he had built for them. Then he fitted up a laboratory, and a machine shop with electrical power, the finest tool-grinding machines, and costly scientific apparatus of all kinds. Here he lived quietly, studying, experimenting, developing new technique in his profession, minding his own business; friendly with his humble neighbours; generous, but not to an extent that would draw attention to him. He did everything that was careful.

"The one thing that led to his undoing was that he had been—too careful. He had chosen too small a town. Neighbours began to speculate, to talk, to pry. Their speculations spread. One day a whisper reached us. Five of our men put on the garb of

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"Without warning, both sides opened fire, and Breitwisser toppled over his bicycle—dead."

peasants and strolled down to his cottage. He was in the yard cleaning his bicycle. Our men knew his readiness with the revolver, and had theirs ready.

"It is hard to tell who became suspicious first, Breitwisser or our men. At any rate, without warning, both sides opened fire, and Breitwisser toppled over his bicycle—dead."

The Austrians have their folk tales, and those who befriend the poor are often immortalized in them. Whether a robber can become the hero of such a legend, as Robin Hood became the hero of earlier days, it is impossible to tell now. But certain it is that fiction can find material in this man, who went to fiction as a guide to living, and then outstripped his guide.

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The VALIANT

by

HOLWORTHY HALL and ROBERT MIDDLEMASS

ILLUSTRATED BY UGO MATANIA

WITH hands behind his back, Father Daly stood looking out of the window. The Governor of the prison sat at his desk, reflectively smoking a long, thin cigar. For several minutes neither had spoken.

The Governor blew a cloud of smoke to the ceiling, inspected the end of his cigar critically, drummed fingers on the desk. He glanced at the clock, peered over his shoulder at the chaplain, and cleared his throat.

"Was he quiet when you left him?"

"Perfectly calm," replied Father Daly, a trifle abstracted, "and I believe he'll stay so to the end."

The Governor threw away his cigar, but took another from the box on his desk. He was verging toward sixty, and his responsibilities had printed themselves in italics on his countenance. His brown hair and bushy eyebrows were heavily shot with grey; there were deep parentheses of wrinkles at the corners of his mouth, and innumerable fine lines about his eyes. His bearing indicated that he was accustomed to rank as a despot, and yet his expression was far from that of an unreasoning tyrant. The Governor believed that in each of us there is a constant oscillation of good and evil; that all evil should justly be punished in this world, and that all good should be generously rewarded—in the next.

"You've got to admit he's plucky," the Governor said. "I never saw such nerve in all my life. It isn't bluff, and it isn't a trance, either, like some of them have—it's plain nerve." He shook his head in frank admiration.

"That's the pity of it—that a man with all his courage hasn't a better use for it," said Father Daly, sorrowfully. "Even now it is very difficult for me to reconcile his character, as I see it, with what we know he has done."

"I can't understand him a bit."

"Nor I."

"When he sent for you last night I hoped he was going to talk," the Governor admitted.

"He did talk, very freely."

"What about?"

Father Daly smiled faintly, and sat beside the desk. "Everything," he said.

"Himself?" queried the Governor, looking up quickly.

"No. That seems to be the only subject he isn't interested in."

The Governor leaned on his desk with both elbows.

"He still won't give you any hint as to who he really is?"

"Not the slightest. He doesn't intend to, either. He intends to die as a man of mystery to us. Sometimes I wonder if he isn't just as much of a mystery to himself."

"Oh, he's trying to shield somebody, that's all. James Dyke isn't his right name—we know that; and we know all the rest of his story is a fake, too. Well, where is his motive? I'll tell you where it is: it's to keep his family and his friends, wherever they are, from knowing what has happened. Lots of them have the same idea, but I never knew one to carry it as far as this before. All we know is that we have a man under sentence of death; and we don't know who he is, or where he comes from, or anything else about him, or any more than we did four months ago."

Father Daly stroked his chin reflectively. He was a slender, white-haired priest of

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somewhat more than middle age, dressed in slightly shabby clericals. His face was calm, intellectual, and inspiring; but just at this moment it gave evidence of a peculiar depression.

"It takes moral courage for a man to shut himself away from his family and his friends like that," he said. "They could have comforted him."

"Not necessarily," said the Governor, getting up, looking at the clock, and glancing out of one of the windows. "I believe I'm getting too old for this sort of thing. An execution didn't bother me so much years ago, but every time one comes along nowadays, my nerves seem to become raw. This time it's ten times worse than ever."

"It certainly isn't a pleasant duty, even with the worst of them," agreed Father Daly, grimly.

"But," said the Governor, wheeling back abruptly, "what bothers *me* is why I should hate this one more than any of the others. The boy is absolutely guilty."

"Yes; he killed a man."

"And he pleaded guilty. So he deserves just what he's going to get."

"That is the law. However, has it ever occurred to you that every now and then when a criminal behaves in a rather gentlemanly fashion to us, we instinctively think of him as just a little less of a criminal?"

"It has," agreed the Governor. "But all the same, this attitude of his makes me curiously nervous. He pleaded guilty, but he doesn't *act* guiltily. I feel just as if at eight o'clock this morning we were going to do something every bit as criminal as he did. I can't help it. And when I begin to feel like that, why, I suppose it's pretty nearly time I sent in my resignation."

"His whole attitude has been very remarkable," said Father Daly, reflectively. "Why, only a few minutes ago I found myself comparing it with the fortitude that the Christian martyrs carried to their death, and yet——"

"He's no martyr!"

"I know. And he's anything in the world but a Christian. That was just what I was going to say."

"Has he any religious streak in him at all?"

"I'm afraid not. He listens to me very attentively, but——"—the chaplain shrugged his shoulders—"it's only because I offer him companionship. Anybody else would do quite as well—and any other topic would suit him better."

"Well, if he wants to face God as a heathen, *we* can't force him to change his mind."

"No," agreed Father Daly, with gentle reproach; "but we can never give up trying to save his immortal soul. And his soul tonight seems dark and foreboding. Yet I haven't given up hope."

"No—you wouldn't."

"I must go back to him. Are you going to talk to him again yourself?" asked the chaplain.

THE Governor opened a drawer of his desk, and brought out a large envelope.

"There's three hundred pounds of his in here," he said. "If he'll only tell me who to send that money to, the mystery will be half solved. But he won't. He hasn't done so up to now. Anyway, I'm going to have another shot at making him talk."

"Shall I go with you to see him, or do you want to see him alone?"

The Governor sat deliberately with one hand at his forehead and the other hand tapping the desk.

"Father," he said, "you have given me an idea. I believe I'm going to do something now that's never been done before in this prison; that is to say—not during the twenty-eight years that *I've* been Governor."

"And that is——?"

"Instead of our going to see him, I'll have that boy brought into this office and let him sit here with you and me."

"All right," agreed the chaplain. "But what is your idea, exactly?"

"Perhaps," said the Governor, tapping the desk with his knuckles, "perhaps if he sits here awhile with just you and me, and we tackle him properly, he will feel different and tell us about himself. It will be quite different from being in his cell; it'll be so much less formal, and maybe he'll weaken." He rang a bell. "Jones," he said to the warder who appeared, "I want you to fetch Dyke here." The jailer stared blankly at him, and the Governor's voice took on an added note of authority. "Fetch Dyke here to me."

"Yes, sir," said the warder, disappearing, just as the telephone on the desk rang.

A few moments later the Governor mopped his forehead with a handkerchief as he hung the receiver up.

"That was Querk, the K.C.," he said. "He says there's a girl on her way here with a special permit from the Home Office to see Dyke. She thinks he's her long-lost brother. She's due here any minute." Again he looked at the clock.

"Poor girl!" commented the chaplain.

Dyke and three warders appeared at the door. The condemned man halted, waiting passively to be told what to do next. He had a lean, pale face, with high forehead, good eyes, and a strong chin. His mouth was ruled in a firm, straight line, and his wavy hair was prematurely grey. His

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"The Governor leaned back and surveyed the prisoner thoughtfully. 'Dyke,' he said, 'I want

figure had the elasticity of youth, but he might have passed among strangers either as a man of forty, or as a man of twenty-five, depending upon the mobility of his features at a given moment.

"The escort will remain there," said the Governor. "Come in, Dyke. Sit down."

DYKE went directly to the chair indicated and sat down.

"Thank you, sir," he said, simply.

The Governor leaned back and surveyed the prisoner thoughtfully.

"Dyke," he said, "I want to tell you that from first to last all the time you've been here you have behaved yourself like a gentleman."

"Why should I cause trouble?" the man asked. His manner was vaguely cynical without being in the least impertinent.

"Well, you *haven't* caused any trouble, and I've tried to show what I think about it. I have made you as comfortable as the law would let me."

"You have been very kind to me," he said. Then, glancing over his shoulder at

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to tell you that all the time you've been here you have behaved yourself like a gentleman.' "

the chaplain, he added: "And you, too, Father."

"I have had you brought in here to talk." Dyke looked inquiringly at the Governor. "To talk with Father Daly and me."

"All right," replied Dyke, carelessly.

"You don't seem to understand that I'm doing something a long way out of the ordinary for you," said the Governor, a trifle piqued at this cool reception of a very distinguished favour.

"Oh, yes, I do," said Dyke; "but maybe *you* don't understand why it doesn't give me much of a thrill."

"My son," said Father Daly, "the Governor is only trying to do you one more kindness."

"I know he is, Father; but there really isn't very much of a gamble in it for him. From now on, one place is about the same as another—from my point of view."

"What do you mean?" asked the Governor.

"Why, I mean," said Dyke, his voice very faintly sarcastic, "that I'm just as much a condemned prisoner here as when I was in my cell."

"Would you rather wait in your cell?" asked the Governor.

"Oh, no; this is a little pleasanter, except——"

"Except what?"

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" In my cell I could smoke."

" What do you want — cigar or cigarette ? "

" Thank you," said Dyke. " A cigarette, please."

The Governor opened a drawer of his desk, took out a box of cigarettes, removed one and handed it to Dyke. Then he struck a match, held it while Dyke got a light, and carefully put out the match.

" Thanks. You're a good host," said Dyke, smiling faintly.

" Before it's too late," said the Governor, " I wish you'd think over what Father Daly and I have said to you so many times."

" I've thought of nothing else," replied Dyke.

" Then—as man to man—and this is your last chance—who are you ? "

Dyke inspected the cigarette.

" Who am I ? James Dyke—a murderer."

" That isn't your real name," the Governor protested.

" You're not going to hang a name—you're going to hang a *man*," said Dyke. " What difference does it make whether you call me Dyke or something else ? "

" You had another name once. What was it ? "

" If I had, I've forgotten it."

" Your mind is made up, my son ? " put in the chaplain.

" Yes, Father. It is."

" You see this pile of letters ? " said the Governor.

" Yes, sir," replied Dyke.

" Every one of them is about the same thing, and altogether we've had many hundreds of them. These are just a few samples."

" What about them ? " asked Dyke.

" We've had letters from all over the British Isles."

" Well ? " murmured the condemned man.

" Do you know what every one of those letters says ? " the Governor asked, impressively.

" No, sir."

" Who *are* you—and are you the missing son—or brother—or husband—or sweetheart ? "

Dyke flicked his cigarette ashes to the floor.

" Have they been answered ? " he asked.

" No ; and that is your fault."

" How's that ? " asked Dyke.

" How can we tell them who you are ? Can't you see you *ought* to make it clear ? "

" No, sir," said Dyke. " I can't exactly see that. Suppose you explain it to me."

" You're trying to shield somebody, aren't you ? " broke from the Governor suddenly.

" Yes—no. I'm not ! "

The Governor glanced at Father Daly and nodded with elation.

" Who is it ? " he asked. " Your family ? "

" I said I'm not," Dyke persisted.

" But first, you said you were."

" That was a slip of the tongue."

" Just listen to me a minute, Dyke," said the Governor, persuasively. " Don't be narrow ; look at this thing in a big, broad way. Suppose you should tell me your real name, and I publish it, it will bring an awful lot of sorrow, let's say, to *one* family, *one* home, and that's your own. That is probably what you are thinking about. Am I right ? You want to spare your family, and in one way I don't blame you. On the surface, it would look like a fine thing for you to do. But look at it *this* way : suppose you tell the exact truth, you might put all that sorrow into *one* home—your own ; though at the same time you'd be putting a tremendous amount of relief into hundreds of others. Don't you understand that ? Don't you see you owe something to all these other people ? "

" I do not," replied Dyke.

FATHER DALY, who had been pacing to and fro silently, suddenly halted.

" The Governor is absolutely right," he said. " You *do* owe something to the other people—you owe them peace of mind ; and for the sake of all those hundreds of poor distressed women, who imagine God knows what, I beg of you to tell us who you are."

" Father, I simply can't do it," replied Dyke.

" Think carefully, my boy ; think very carefully. We're not asking out of idle curiosity," the chaplain urged.

" I know that, Father," said Dyke ; " but please don't let's talk about it any more. It's quite simple to tell the writers of those letters that I'm not the man they're looking for. That will be the truth, too. Because I haven't any mother—or father—or sister—or wife—or sweetheart. That's fair enough, isn't it ? "

Father Daly sighed wearily. " As you will, my son," he said.

" There's one more thing," put in the Governor.

" Yes, sir."

The Governor took up the envelope from his desk. " That belongs to you. Three hundred pounds."

" Good-looking, isn't it ? " was Dyke's only comment.

" What do you want us to do with it ? " the Governor asked casually.

" Well, I can't very well take them with me ; so, under the circumstances, I'd like to put them where they'll do the most good," replied Dyke.

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"Who do you want us to send it to?" the Governor asked, more casually yet.

Dyke laughed quietly.

"Now sir, you didn't think you were going to catch me that way, did you?"

The Governor frowned. "Perhaps somebody would be glad of the money," he said.

Dyke crossed his legs and tossed the envelope to the desk.

"I don't know," he said. "I'll think of something to do with it. I'll tell you in—in time. Is there anything else?"

"Not unless you want to make some sort of statement."

'No; I think I've said everything. I killed a man, and I'm not sorry for it—that is, I'm not sorry I killed that particular person. I——"

Father Daly raised his hand.

"Repentance——" he began.

"Father," Dyke interrupted, "I have heard that repentance is the sick-bed of the soul—and mine is very well and flourishing. The man deserved to be killed; he wasn't fit to live. It was my duty to kill him, and I did it. I had never struck a man in anger in all my life, but when I knew what that fellow had done, I knew I had to kill him, and I did it deliberately and intentionally—and carefully. I knew what I was doing, and I haven't any excuse—that is, I haven't any excuse that satisfies the law. Now, I learned pretty early in life that whatever you do in this world you have to pay for in one way or another. If you kill a man, the price you have to pay is this"—he made a gesture which swept the entire room—"and I'm going to pay it. That's all there is to say about that. And in less than an hour from now, while my body is lying dead, if a couple of angel policemen arrest my soul and take it up before the Creator——"

"Hush, my boy," protested the chaplain, profoundly shocked.

"I beg your pardon, Father. I don't mean to trample on anything that's sacred to you, but what I do mean to say is this: if I've got to be judged after my death for the crime of murder, I'm not afraid; because the other fellow will certainly be there, too, won't he? And the whole story—both sides of it—will be known. *You* never heard it and never will; and they never heard it in court either. In the circumstances, I'm quite willing to take my chance. That's how concerned I am about the hereafter. And, if it'll make you feel any better, Father, why, I *do* rather think there's going to be a hereafter. I read a book once that said a milligram of musk will give out perfume for seven thousand years, and a milligram of radium will give out light for *seventy* thousand. Why shouldn't a soul—mine, for instance—live more than twenty-seven? But if there *isn't* any hereafter—if we just die and are dead and that's all—why, I'm still not sorry and I'm not afraid, because I'm square with the other fellow—the law is square with me, and it's all balanced on the books."

A WARDER knocked at the door.

"Well? What is it?" asked the Governor.

"Visitor to see you, sir. With a note from the Home Office."

"A girl?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have her thoroughly searched, and then wait till I call you. Dyke," he added, turning to the condemned man, "a young woman has just come to see you—do you want to see her?"

"I don't think so. What does she want?"

"She thinks perhaps she's your sister, and she's come hundreds of miles to find out."

"She's wrong. I haven't any sister."

The Governor hesitated a moment. Then: "Shall I tell her that, or do you want to tell her yourself?"

"Oh, you tell her. But—just a second—she's come hundreds of miles to see me, did you say?"

"Yes; and she's got special permission from the Home Office to talk to you."

"And a year ago," said Dyke, "nobody'd have crossed the street to look at me. Now they come hundreds of miles!"

Father Daly turned to him.

"This is one of your debts to humanity, Dyke. It wouldn't take you two minutes to see her; and, if you don't, after she's made that long journey in hope and dread and suffering——"

"Where can I talk with her—here?"

"If you wish," said the Governor.

"Alone?"

"Father and I will leave you with her and two armed guards."

"I haven't the faintest idea who the girl is," said Dyke; "but if she happens to be some poor, misguided, sentimental fool, with a dose of cyanide of potassium for me, she's wasting her time. I wouldn't cheat the law in this matter for anything in the world—not even to please a young lady."

The Governor went into the next room.

"Has she been thoroughly searched?" he asked a warder.

"Yes, sir."

"Everything all right?"

"Yes, sir."

"Bring her in, then," he said, throwing away his cigar.

A young girl appeared on the threshold, and cast about in mingled curiosity and apprehension. She was fresh and wholesome,

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and rather pretty; but her manner betrayed a certain spiritual aloofness from the ultra-modern world. Her dress was not quite old-fashioned, yet it hinted at the taste and repression of an old-fashioned home.

She was neither timid nor aggressive, but was self-unconscious. She looked at the Governor squarely, yet not in boldness, nor in feminine appeal. Rather she had the fearlessness of a girl who had lost none of her illusions about men in general. Her expression was essentially serious; it conveyed, however, the idea that her seriousness was due to her present mission, and that ordinarily she took active joy in the mere pleasure of existence.

The Governor, who had expected a very different type of visitor, coughed slightly. "All right, Wilson," he said; and the warder went out.

"WILL you sit down?"

"Thank you," the girl said, taking the chair beside his desk and regarding him trustfully. He was palpably affected by her youth and innocence, and not quite sure how best to proceed, but eventually made an awkward beginning.

"You want to see Dyke, I understand?"

"Yes—I *hope* I'm not—too late."

"No, you're not too late." He was appraising her carefully. "But I want to ask you a few questions beforehand. I just want to make it easier for you, not harder. Where do you live?"

"In Wheatley—a Cumberland village."

"And you live there with your father and mother?"

"No; just my mother and I. My father died when I was a little baby."

"Why didn't you mother come here herself, instead of sending you?"

"She couldn't She's ill."

"I see. Have you any brothers or sisters?"

"Just one brother—this one. He and I were the only children. We were very fond of each other." She was a shade more at her ease now.

"He was considerably older than you?" asked the Governor.

"Oh, yes. Ten years older."

"Why did he leave home?"

"I don't really know, except that he just wanted to live in large towns. Wheatley is very small."

"How long is it since you last saw him?"

"Eight years."

"As long as that?"

The Governor's voice was almost paternal.

"H'm! And how old are you now?"

"Almost eighteen."

"Almost eighteen," the Governor repeated slowly. "H'm! And are you sure after all this time that you would recognize your brother if you saw him?"

"Well"—she looked down, as if embarrassed to make the admission—"of course, I—I *think* so; but perhaps I couldn't. You see, I was only a little girl when he went away. He wasn't a bad boy; I don't think he ever could be really bad. But if this *is* my brother, he has been in a great deal of trouble, and you know that trouble makes people look different."

"Yes, it does. But what is it makes you think this man Dyke may be your brother—and why didn't you think of it sooner? The case has been in the papers for the last six months."

"It wasn't until the day before yesterday that mother saw a photograph of him in one of the papers. It did look just the least little *bit* like him, and mother wanted me to come and find out for sure."

"I see," said the Governor. "It's too bad she couldn't come herself. She would probably know him, whether he had changed or not."

"Yes; but I'll do the best I can."

"When was the last time you heard from him, and where was he, and what was he doing?"

"Why, it's about six or seven years since we had a letter from Joe. He was in New Zealand then."

"What doing?"

"I don't remember. Before he left home, though, he worked in a library. He liked books."

"Why do you suppose he didn't write home?" asked the Governor, suspiciously.

"I — I couldn't say. He was just—thoughtless."

"Wasn't in trouble of any kind?"

"Oh, *no!* Never. That is—unless he's—here now."

The Governor deliberated. Then:—

"How are you going to identify him? You say that it is quite possible you wouldn't know him even if you saw him; and I'll guarantee this man Dyke won't help you out very much. How do you think you're going to tell? Suppose he doesn't want to be recognized by you or anybody else? Suppose he's so ashamed of himself that he——?"

"I had thought of that," the girl broke in. "I'm just going to talk to him—ask him questions—about things he and I used to do together. I'll watch his face, and if he is my brother I am sure I can tell."

The Governor looked at her with tolerant doubt.

"What did you and your brother ever do together that would help you now?"

"He used to play games with me when I was a little girl, and tell me stories: that's

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"'Dyke, this is the young lady who has come all the way from Cumberland to see you.' Dyke inspected her coldly from head to foot."

what I'm counting on mostly—the stories."

"I'm afraid——" the Governor began.

"Especially Shakespeare stories," said the girl. "He used to get the plots of the plays—all the Shakespeare plays—out of a book by a man named Lamb, and then he'd tell me

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the stories in his own words. It was wonderful!"

The Governor shook his head.

"Why do you do that?" she asked.

"I'm afraid this boy isn't your brother. I'll let you see him for yourself, only you might as well be prepared. If he turns out to be your brother—which he won't—you can have, say, twenty minutes with him. If he isn't, please cut it as short as you can."

The girl's lips trembled.

"You see," she said, "I must tell mother something perfectly definite. She has always worried about him, and—and *now* the suspense is terrible for her. It would be awful for us if this *is* Joe; but even that would be better for mother than just to stay awake at nights, and wonder and wonder, and never *know* what became of him."

"Come along then," he said, and took her to his own office.

"Dyke, this is the young lady who has come all the way from Cumberland to see you."

Dyke, who had been talking in an undertone to Father Daly, raised his head quickly.

"Yes, sir?"

The girl had risen, breathless, and stood fixed. Dyke inspected her coldly from head to foot.

"Thank you," he said to the Governor. "It won't take long."

The Governor had been scanning the girl's expression. Now, as he saw that she neither recognized Dyke nor failed to recognize him, he made a little grimace in confirmation of his own judgment. Then he and Father Daly left them with the armed guard.

DYKE and the girl faced each other; Dyke, well-poised and insouciant, giving the impression of complete indifference to the moment. The girl, on the other hand, was deeply agitated, and her agitation was gradually increased by Dyke's own attitude.

"Mother sent me to see you," she declared, after several efforts to speak.

"Yes?" He was politely callous.

"You see, we haven't seen or heard of my brother Joe for ever so long, and mother thought—after she saw a picture of you in the paper——"

"That I might be your brother Joe?"

"Yes, that's it," she declared, obviously relieved.

"Well, you can easily see that I'm not your brother, can't you?"

She was looking hard at him now.

"I'm not sure. You look a little like him, just as the picture in the paper did; but then again, it's so long"—she crinkled her eyebrows dubiously—"and I thought of Joe so differently——"

"As a matter of fact," he said, "I couldn't be *your* brother or anybody else's brother, because I never had a sister. So that rather settles it." His manner had become somewhat indulgent, as though to a child.

"Honestly?" she exclaimed.

"Honestly."

The girl, however, was unconvinced, and became more appealing.

"What is your real name?"

"Dyke—Dyke—James Dyke."

"You mean that?"

"Certainly. You don't think I'd tell a lie at this stage of the game, do you?"

"No, I don't believe you would. Where do you come from—I mean where were you born?"

"In London; but I've lived all over the place."

"Didn't you ever live in Cumberland?" she asked quickly.

"No. Never."

"What kind of work did you do—what was your business?"

"Oh, I'm a sort of Jack-of-all-trades. I have been everything a man could be—except a success."

"Do you like books?"

"Books?"

"Yes—books to read."

"I don't read when there's anything better to do."

"Did you ever work in a library—for a living, I mean?"

"Oh, no."

The girl was growing confused.

"I hope you don't mind my asking so many questions," she said. "But I——"

"No—go on, if it will relieve you," said Dyke.

"Did you ever want to be an actor? Or *were* you ever?"

"No."

"Do you know any poetry?" the question came, helplessly.

"Not to speak of."

She paused a moment; and then, watching him very earnestly, recited just above her breath:—

"'*Thou knowst the mask of night is on my face,*
Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek
For that which——'"

Realizing that Dyke's expression was one of utter vacuity she faltered and broke off, but continued to watch him unwaveringly.

"Don't you know what that is?" she asked.

"No. To tell the truth, it sounds silly to *me*. Doesn't it to you?"

She gathered courage and put him to one

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more test, though her intonation had become slightly forlorn :—

"'*Good night, good night, parting is such sweet sorrow*
That I shall say good night till it be morrow.'"

"Eh?" exclaimed Dyke, his mouth twitching in apparent amusement.

"What comes next?" she asked.

"Good Lord! I don't know."

She gazed intently, almost imploringly, at him, as though making a struggle to read his mind. Then she relaxed and held out her hand.

"Good-bye. You—you're *not* Joe, are you? I—I had to come and find out, though. I hope I haven't made you too unhappy."

Dyke ignored her hand.

"You're not going now?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, spiritless. "I promised the—is he the Governor—that man in there? I said I should not stay if you weren't—my brother. And you aren't, so——"

"You're going back to your mother?"

"Yes," she said, quietly.

"I'm surprised that she sent a girl like you on a sorry errand like this, instead of——"

"She's ill."

"Oh, that's too bad."

"She's very ill," said the girl, twisting her handkerchief. "And most of it is from worrying about Joe."

"Still," said Dyke, "when you tell her that her son isn't a murderer—at least, that he isn't *this* one—that will comfort her a good deal, won't it?"

"Yes, I think perhaps it will," she admitted reluctantly; "only——"

"Only what?"

"I don't think mother will ever be *really* well again until she finds out for certain where Joe is and what has become of him."

Dyke shook his head compassionately.

"Mothers ought not to be treated like that," he said. "I wish I'd treated *mine* better. By the way, you didn't tell me what your name is."

"Josephine Paris."

"Paris!" Dyke had become suddenly attentive. "That's an unusual name. I've heard it somewhere, too."

"Just like the name of the city—in France."

"And your brother's name was Joseph?" Dyke queried, knitting his brows.

"Yes—they used to call us Joe and Josie; that's funny, isn't it?"

"No," said Dyke, thoughtfully. "I don't think it's so very funny—I rather like it." He passed his hand over his forehead, as if trying to coerce his memory.

"WHAT'S the matter?" she asked.

"I was thinking of something," said Dyke, frowning. "Now, what on earth was that boy's name! Wait a minute, don't tell me—wait a minute—I've got it!" He punctuated his triumph with one fist in the palm of the other hand. "Joseph Anthony Paris!"

The girl stared at him, amazed. "Why," she declared, "that's his name! That's Joe! How did you ever——?"

"Wait! Now listen carefully to what I say, and don't interrupt me, because we've only got a minute or two, and I want you to remember this correctly." His manner had suddenly become very forcible and convincing. "I want you to tell your mother. During the war I was in France for four years. Early one morning we'd made a big trench raid, and there was an officer who'd been wounded coming back, and was lying out there in a shell-hole under fire. The Germans were getting ready for a raid on their own, so they were putting down a barrage. This officer was lying right in the middle of it. Well, all of a sudden a young fellow I knew by the name of Cox dashed out of our trench and went for that officer. He had to go through a curtain of shells and, more than that, they opened on him with rifles and machine-guns. The chances were just about a million to one against him, and he must have known it, but he went out just the same. He got the officer in his arms and started back, but he'd only gone a few yards when a shell burst close to them. We got them in, but the youngster died an hour later. I had a few words with him, and just before he died he was telling me how he'd enlisted under a wrong name—that his real name was Joseph Anthony Paris. I was going to take a message for his folks at home, but the Germans came over then. And when I got back Cox—that is, Paris—was dead."

The girl put both hands to her breast. "Oh!" she breathed softly.

"If that was your brother's name," said Dyke, "then you can tell your mother that he died like a brave man and a soldier, in France."

"Joe—my brother Joe—is dead?" the girl said, slowly.

"On the field of battle. It was one of the wonderful heroic things that went almost unnoticed, as so many of them did. If an officer had seen it, there would have been a decoration for your mother to keep and remember him by."

"And you were there—and saw it?"

"I was there and saw it. It was five years ago now. That's why you and your

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mother haven't heard from him. It certainly ought to make your mother happy when she knows that her boy died as a soldier and not as a criminal."

"Yes, yes; it will!" the girl declared, transfigured.

"And does it make you happy, too?" Dyke asked.

"Yes. So happy—after what we were both afraid of—I can't even cry—yet." She brushed her eyes with her handkerchief. "I can hardly wait to take the news to her."

DYKE was struck by a sudden inspiration.

"I want to give you something else to take to her," he said, picking up from the desk the envelope containing the money. "I want you to give this to your mother from me. Tell her it is from a man who saw how your brother died, so it's a sort of memorial for him." He touched her arm as she absently began to tear open the envelope. "No; don't you open it—let *her* do it."

"What is it? Can't I know?" she asked.

"Never mind now," said Dyke, "but give it to her. It's all I have in the world and it's too late now for me to do anything else with it. And get your mother to buy a little gold locket to wear for her son—and you get one, too, and wear it—here!" He touched his heart. "Will you?"

"Yes—I will," she said. "And yet somehow I shall almost feel that I'm wearing it for you, too."

"Oh, no! You mustn't ever do that. I'm not fit to be mentioned in the same breath with a boy like your brother. And now"—glancing at the clock—"I'm afraid it *is* time for you to go. I'm sorry, but—you'd better. I'm glad you came before it was too late, though."

"Good-bye, and thank you," she said, giving him her hand. "You've done more for me—and mother—than I could possibly tell you. And—and I'm so sorry for you—so *truly* sorry—I wish I could only do something to make you a tiny bit happier, too. *Is* there anything I could do?"

Dyke stared at her and by degrees became wistful.

"Why—yes, there is," he said. "Only I——" He left the sentence uncompleted.

"What is it?" she asked.

"I can't tell you," said Dyke, looking away. "I never should have let myself think of it."

"Please tell me," the girl pleaded. "I want you to. For—for Joe's sake, tell me what I can do."

"Well"—Dyke's voice was low and desolate—"during all the months I've been in prison, you're the first girl I've seen. I didn't ever expect to see one again. I'd forgotten how much like angels women look. I've been terribly lonely, this morning especially, and if you really do want to do something for me—for your brother's sake—you see, you're going to leave me in just a minute and—and I haven't any sister of my own, or anybody else, to say good-bye to me—so, if you could—*really* say good-bye——"

She looked at him for a moment, understood, flushed, and then slowly moved into his outstretched arms. He held her close to him, touched his lips to her forehead twice, and then released her.

"Good-bye, my dear," he said, thickly.

"Good-bye." She endeavoured to smile, but her voice caught in her throat. "Good-bye."

"What is it?" Dyke asked, impulsively.

"N—nothing," she answered.

"Nothing?"

"I was thinking," she declared, clutching her handkerchief tight in her palm, "I was thinking what I used to say to my brother—for good night." She very nearly broke down. "If I *only* could have—have said it to him just once more—for good-bye."

"What was it?" Dyke's mouth twitched.

"I—I told it to you once, and you said it was silly."

"Say it again," asked Dyke, gently. She could not quite control her voice.

"'*Good night, good night, parting is such sweet sorrow*
That I shall say good night till it be morrow.'"

She went uncertainly toward the door, hesitated, almost turned back, and then with a little choking sob hurried away. For several seconds Dyke stood rigidly intent upon that doorway; until at length, without changing his attitude or his expression, he spoke very tenderly and reminiscently:—

"'*Sleep dwell upon thine eyes, peace in thy breast:*
Would I were sleep and peace, so sweet to rest.'"

THE Governor and Father Daly came in quietly, and as they saw Dyke, rapt and unconscious of them, they looked at each other, questioningly. The Governor glanced at the clock and was about to interrupt Dyke's solitary reflections, but Father Daly quietly restrained him.

Dyke turned at last, as though unwillingly, from the door. There were depths in his eyes, and his thoughts were evidently far away. He sat heavily in the chair and leaned outward, his right hand on his knee.

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"He held her close to him, touched his lips to her forehead twice, and then released her."

He put his left hand to his throat as though to protect it from a sudden pain. Then gazing straight ahead into the unknown, he spoke in reverie :—

"'*Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,*
It seems to me most strange that men should fear ;
Seeing that death, a necessary end,
Will come when it will come.'"

He stopped, musing for a time, while the Governor glanced perplexedly at Father Daly to discover if the priest could interpret this. Father Daly's face was illuminated.

Again Dyke spoke :—

"'*Cowards die many times before their deaths ;*
The valiant never taste of death but once.'"

He stopped again and shuddered a trifle ; his head drooped and he repeated, barely above a whisper :—

"'*The valiant never taste of death but once.*'"

The door opened noiselessly. It was but three minutes to eight. There was a moment of dead silence ; Dyke lifted his head and caught sight of the grim figure at the open door. With a quick intake of his breath, he started half out of his seat and stared, fascinated ; he sank back slowly, turned his head to gaze first at Father Daly and then at the Governor. The Governor averted his eyes, but Father Daly's expression was of supreme pity and encouragement. Involuntarily, Dyke's hand again went creeping upward toward his throat, but he arrested it. He grasped the arms of his chair and braced himself. Then, rising, he stood very erect, in almost the position of a soldier at attention.

"All right, let's go," he said, his voice low and steady.

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AN INDIVIDUALIST FROM BLUE WING

by Edgar Milne

ILLUSTRATED BY WILTON WILLIAMS

MR. THRELFALL, of the firm of Smiles, Threlfall, and Threlfall, solicitors, of Lincoln's Inn Fields, was returning from a week-end in Hampshire with a celibate aunt.

The holiday had not been altogether a success, for the weather had been bad, the old lady's temper uncertain, and Mr. Threlfall had had the misfortune to sit on Roger, the cat: so that, on the whole, Mr. Threlfall reflected, so far as recreation went, he might just as well have stayed at home.

He was now alone in a first-class railway carriage, absorbed in the *Times*, when, just as the train was leaving East Croydon, the door was flung violently open and an individual clambered in—an individual whom Mr. Threlfall still tells his friends about and whom he will probably never forget to his dying day.

The stranger was a ruddy, middle-sized man wearing a tall white hat. This does not sound unorthodox, but literally no one ever does wear a tall white hat except a Paris cabman, and this was snow-white with a green band. The new-comer's clothes would have offended the sense of propriety of a music-hall knockabout comedian, consisting as they did of baggy grey tweeds with a white spot pattern like dominoes, with trousers preternaturally wide in the flank and tight at the ankle, terminating in black spats and white tennis shoes. He wore a pink collar, a huge flowing pink tie, and a yellow rose in his button-hole. An oblong tortoiseshell-framed eyeglass was wedged into his right eye and secured by a green silk ribbon an inch wide. But all these sartorial details made less impression on Mr. Threlfall than his fellow-passenger's taste in whiskers, for although a comparatively young man—probably not more than thirty—he sported a curiously-trimmed chin-beard, bright tawny in colour and made more incongruous by an absurd inch and half wide "tooth-brush tuft" on his upper lip. His blond hair was brushed forward in the familiar mode of 1860 or the "bobbed" style of certain young ladies of to-day.

"Fine morning!" volunteered the stranger, cheerily, disposing his feet on the opposite cushions and proceeding to mop his brow with a capacious apple-green handkerchief.

Mr. Threlfall was too startled to speak. Was this fellow who thus dared to invade his privacy, the privacy of a first-class compartment, a professional clown, an itinerant mummer, or an escaped lunatic? Mr. Threlfall seemed to remember dimly some such apparition as this in a disreputable vaudeville show of his youth—or was it on the sands at Margate? But the whiskers—these were tangibly, palpably, lamentably, startingly real, and the whole *tenue*, although revolting, was new, clean, and costly. The lunatic (for, of course, he must be a lunatic) momentarily turned his attention to the parcel of newspapers he had previously thrown down on the seat at his side, and Mr. Threlfall, while pretending to be absorbed in his *Times*, glanced furtively at their titles. He made out the *Beekeeper's Journal*, the *Economist*, the *Auctioneer's Record*, and the *Taxidermist*. There were also three or four small bound books which Mr. Threlfall at first took for popular novels, but which

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turned out to be ' How to Speak Russian in Three Months," "The Amateur Joiner," and the "Elements of Biology." Observing Mr. Threlfall's interest, the stranger suddenly remarked :—

"Well, old man, do you like my get-up ?"

"H'm !—a little eccentric," murmured Mr. Threlfall.

"It's a free country, ain't it ?" asked his companion, sharply.

"Quite," agreed Mr. Threlfall.

"I'm a free man, ain't I ?"

"I suppose so," assented Mr. Threlfall.

"You bet I am, old man."

Mr. Threlfall resented being addressed so familiarly by a perfect stranger, but in dealing with a lunatic from whom there is no immediate escape it is necessary to be tactful, so he smiled weakly.

"I can dress as I like, eat what I like, say what I like, and do what I like. I'm not a slave any more. I'm a *man !*"

Mr. Threlfall would have liked to have corrected this term to maniac, but he only murmured, "Quite so."

"You bet your life ! My name's Slode—James P. Slode of Blue Wing, Manitoba. You don't happen to have been an officer, do you ?"

Mr. Threlfall shook his head.

"I remember an R.T.O. at Bertincourt that looked as like you as two peas. Were you in the war at all ?"

Mr. Threlfall flushed slightly.

"I—I wasn't accepted for active service—abroad. I did my bit at home. In the Milk Control Office—and elsewhere."

"Say no more, old man. I served four years and a quarter—at the front. I'm free now. I went home, found my section turned into a Government chemical works, and Blue Wing grown into a small town. I sold my real estate for eighty-five thousand dollars, cash, and took the next express train east. They wanted to keep me there a spell ; but I told them I was a free man and so I am, by gum ! I'm going to do what I like. No more orders and regulations for me. No more *verbotens* and *defendus*, neither."

Slode produced a cigar-box from his capacious coat-pocket, removed a rubber band, and opening the lid disclosed several dozen large cigars with green and gold bands. He offered the box to Mr. Threlfall and, upon that gentleman politely declining, he selected a couple himself, closed the box, and returned it to his pocket.

"I tell you, old man, it's a great thing to do anything you like, to be absolutely independent. Simply *great !*"

"How ?" asked Mr. Threlfall.

"Well—no rules. No ruddy conventions. Do as you damn well please."

As he spoke, Slode ignited a vesuvian, which exploded so loudly that Mr. Threlfall involuntarily jumped ; and lit a cigar which he puffed for a few seconds ruminatively. Then, when he had ascertained it was burning well, he removed it, lit the second cigar, adjusted the pair in opposite corners of his mouth, and calmly resumed his puffing. You would have thought that with his handicap articulation would have been difficult ; but Slode managed it.

"Ever seen anyone do this before ?"

"Never," asseverated Mr. Threlfall. "Why do you do it ?"

"Because I can afford it," replied Slode. "Any fool can smoke one cigar at a time. Hallo, what's that ?"

"What is what ?" inquired Mr. Threlfall, following his companion's eye. There was a framed and glazed notice on the wall of the compartment. It read :—

> TO STOP THE TRAIN
>
> PULL THIS CORD.
>
> PENALTY FOR IMPROPER USE, £5.

As Slode's gaze rested on this announcement his cigar-laden countenance became still further contorted. He became so much amused at last that he removed the cigars and laid them carefully in the ash-tray by the window-sill and chuckled loudly. He passed his apple-green handkerchief over his forehead.

"I could stop this blessed train, if I liked."

"You'd better not," ejaculated Mr. Threlfall.

"Why not ?" asked Slode. And then, before the other could interfere, he rose, reached up quickly, seized the suspended cord, and pulled it vigorously.

"Good heavens, man !" cried Mr. Threlfall, in horror, "what have you done ?"

Instantly both felt the sensation of brakes applied, of violently interrupted movement, the cacophonous grinding of metal, and the train came to a standstill in the midst of open country. Scores of heads were thrust from carriage windows, passengers began to alight, and a couple of guards were observed running along the footboard, glaring into the carriages and shouting at intervals.

"Who pulled the cord ? Who's stopped the train ?"

At last a train official was heard approaching very close to Slode's compartment. Slode, who was standing by the window, put his hand smilingly into his breast-pocket, took out a thick roll of notes, selected one, and returned the remainder.

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"Are you the guard of this train?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir." The poor man was breathless with his sudden exertions.

"Is there much excitement?"

"What do *you* think? Train stopped dead three mile short of Hale Junction. Someone pulled the cord. First time such a thing's happened in twenty years, to my knowledge."

Slode fairly beamed.

"Splendid," he murmured, "really first rate. Well worth it. Every darn window full o' heads. Wind up and no mistake. Well, here you are, guard!"

Slode leaned from the window, extending a five-pound note.

"Take it, my lad. It's worth it. I don't grudge the money."

The guard took the note, recognized its denomination, and stared blankly.

"What's this for?" he demanded.

"Why, 'penalty for improper use, £5.' It's all right—good money."

The guard exploded. "Did you pull that cord?"

"Yes. I certainly did. You needn't bother about a receipt. I just wanted to see if the machinery worked all right."

The assistant guard was now alongside.

"Says he pulled the cord," explained No. 1; "look here, mister, this five-pound note ain't no good to me. I'll just trouble you for your name and address." Then to No. 2 he said, "Let's get on, Bill. You'll pay for this," he resumed hotly to Slode. "You'll jolly well pay for this."

"Ain't I offering to pay? I'm giving you good money."

"What the deuce d'ye mean by stopping the train?"

"I didn't stop the train. *You*—or p'r'aps the engineer—stopped the train. *I'm* paying the statutory amount, ain't I? You did it well and I'm quite pleased with you, my man."

The train was now on the point of resuming its journey, the guard clinging to the footboard.

"You look to me like a ruddy circus freak. You must be insane!"

"Come inside and have a chat," suggested Slode, affably.

"You'll hear from me at Waterloo."

"Ain't that what Wellington said to Napoleon?"

MR. THRELFALL, who had during this colloquy been sitting in the far corner of the compartment, trembling lest he should be implicated in this disgraceful episode, saw with relief the official disappear.

Slode broke into unrestrained laughter.

"My—now that is what I call a real pleasant interlude!" he exclaimed. "Thoroughly enjoyable. Far better than a front seat at a prize-fight at twice the money."

"You have singular ideas of humour!"

"Right, every time, old man! I recognize the kind of entertainment I want and go straight for it. I hadn't been an hour at Southampton when I crossed the railway track, finding I was on the wrong platform. The porter stopped me. 'How much?' I asked. 'Forty shillings,' he said. I counted out the money and crossed the track. I was just stepping up on the platform when another porter stopped me. 'You can't come this way. Go round and take the subway.' 'How much to cross the track again?' He said there was no charge, so I crossed deliberately in the presence of about a million people, so it only cost twenty shillings a trip."

"If you're not careful you'll find yourself in jail or the lunatic asylum," observed Mr. Threlfall, fretfully.

"Not while my money holds out," retorted Slode, confidently; "people make allowances for a sportsman who can afford to back his fancy. I'm just wondering how much of that five pounds will find its way into the pockets of the railroad company?"

Slode's wonder was perhaps not unjustified, for the train eventually steamed into Waterloo and Slode alighted and boisterously hailed a porter, unabashed and unimpeded. As for Mr. Threlfall, with his heart in his mouth, he hurried away, with Slode's valedictory "So long, old man! Hope to see you again," sounding *diminuendo* in his ears.

"A confounded lunatic," he muttered to himself. "The fellow's upset me for the day. Heavens, what an experience!"

Slode, collecting his luggage, a large Saratoga trunk painted a bright pink, with "J. P. Slode" in bold black letters on its front, got into a taxi, tipped the porter half a crown and a cigar, and drove to the Oxford Palace Hotel. His arrival naturally created a sensation; but he managed to settle with the driver without too great a congestion of the traffic, enter the portals, and make his way to the desk. Instantly the transaction of affairs was arrested at the sight of this highly eccentric individual who seemed to have mistaken the public entrance of the Oxford Palace Hotel for the stage-door of the Palladium.

Slode stuck his glass into his right eye and stroked his egregious beard.

"I wired for a first-class room from Southampton," he explained to the clerk. The clerk took a single look at him, a look which embraced the staring white hat, with its green band, the pink collar, the beard,

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"The guard exploded. 'Did you pull that cord?' 'Yes; I just wanted to see if the machinery worked all right.'"

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and the domino-spotted tweeds, and accomplished an involuntary ingurgitation of breath.

"What name?" he asked.

Slode told him. The clerk excused himself, and the next moment reappeared with the manager. The latter grasped the situation on the spot and wasted no time in deprecatory language.

"Sorry," he said, absolutely full up!"

"Full up?" echoed Slode. "Look here, mister—understand me—expense is no object. I'll pay ten pounds in advance. I——"

"Stand aside, please. These other gentlemen are waiting. Sorry we can't oblige you. Good day!"

Slode's sublime self-confidence, although he felt himself thus summarily elbowed aside, did not desert him.

"Right you are, old man! But I guess there are others. You're losing more'n *I* am." And raising his preposterous white topper in the direction of the startled group by the reception desk, he retraced his footsteps to the door. The hall-porter, pocketing a generous tip, gave him the name of another hotel, and summoned another taxi for him. Slode hied himself there; but alas! his reception at the Royal Charles was like his reception at the Oxford Palace, and—to cut a long story short—the brisk and ridiculous individualist from Blue Wing, Manitoba, who wanted to do what he liked, went from caravanserai to caravanserai for several hours with no more success than that of the camel who sought to pass through the eye of a needle or the rich man who tried to get into heaven, all because he was not garbed in the conventional raiment which a tyrannical fashion prescribed for male members of the human species who seek hospitality west of Aldgate Pump. He had, however, left his pink Saratoga with the hall-porter of the Oxford Palace to be called for; and he eventually contrived to procure an apology for a meal at the Charing Cross Railway Buffet. But at nine o'clock that evening it was rather a weary and dispirited Slode who broke away from his ribald pursuers in Villiers Street, turned sharply to the left, and, in the gathering dusk, entered the Embankment gardens. He told himself he had had a great day and cocked his hat with renewed bravado. He admitted that his refusal at the hotels was a check, but only a temporary one, and a man who has slept for four years in barns, cellars, and dug-outs can make light of a little thing like that. It showed the force of prejudice and convention in this silly old country. They wanted to crush out a man's individuality: all he had to do was to wear a mackintosh and a golf cap and they'd take him in fast enough. But he wouldn't give in to them! They were not going to dictate to *him*, James P. Slode, what sort of clothes he was going to wear or how his whiskers should be trimmed—not by a long chalk! No, sir-*ee!* "I'm not going to give in, and become a ruddy slave again! I can do as I like now, because I've got the money to pay for it."

IT was, he told himself, as he mechanically took a seat upon a bench, different when he was Private J. P. Slode, No. A.D.1952, C.E.F. Then he had to do as he was told; and what a dog's life he had led! Cowering under the glance of every paltry little pipsqueak, just because he called himself an officer, bullied by the sergeant-major, hauled over the coals if there was a button undone or the string of his puttees untied—Gad, what a life!

He had sworn then he'd be a free man some day, free to do just what he pleased and not care a hang—not if he was reclining on a feather bed in the middle of a barrack square, with a jug of beer in each hand and Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig came barging along! And now he was free—he didn't give a hang for anybody's opinion, and for two cents he'd curl up and go to sleep on this very bench, yes, this very——

He turned. Up to now he had almost been unaware that he was not the only occupant of the bench. There was another, a girl, plainly but neatly clad. A pretty girl, too, though rather pale; she was reading a letter and seemed so engrossed in it that she paid no more attention to Slode than he had paid to her. Yet a single glance at her profile somehow transfixed Slode, instantly arresting all his fugitive fancies.

Where had he seen that profile before? Was it not—could it be? Even before she had turned and confronted him, a wave of emotion had passed through Slode, and his growing mood of languor became exchanged for a lively eagerness. He jumped up from the bench, with outstretched palm, ejaculating:—

"Snakes alive! it's *Elise*—Elise Lebrun of Hersin-Coupigny! Don't you remember me, ma'm'selle?"

The girl, still seated, surveyed the fantastic figure before her in mingled astonishment and alarm.

"No, m'sieu, I am sure I have *nevaire* seen you before!"

Slode recollected himself and laughed loudly.

"No, of course—of course, you wouldn't recognize me. But you are Ma'm'selle Elise, are you not? Don't you remember Jim—Jim Slode, the Canadian soldier—10th battalion—Jim of Blue Wing—who was sick—billeted at your house at Hersin-Coupigny during the War? Have you forgotten, you

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—you gave me this—a keepsake—just before the last push in August, '18 ? "

And Slode pulled out of his waistcoat-pocket an ingeniously chased pencil-case, fashioned out of an empty cartridge, with a silver top and an inscription in silver filagree :—

" *E. le B. à Jim. En souvenir*, 1915-18."

On his companion's features, now no longer pale, laughter and perplexity struggled for mastery, as she gazed alternately from the modest little trinket to Slode. Suddenly a light seemed to break in upon her, and with merry vivacity she took Slode's extended hand.

" Forgive me, M'sieu Jim. I am so stupid and your disguise—oh, it is so clevaire ! You also—you go to the ball—and I nevaire guess. Your costume, it is superb—*épatant !* "

She withdrew a step in which to survey him more completely—from the snow-white hat to the shoes, now alas ! not so white : the originality, audacity, and arresting salience of what in her native tongue is called the *tout ensemble*—and then no longer could she restrain her mirth. The longer she looked at Slode the more she laughed.

" To think that you are M'sieu Jim—*le brav' soldat*, Jim Slode, that my mother and my little brothers are so fond at Hersin-Coupigny ! Oh, but you are funny—but funny ! You will take the great prize. You will have *un succès fou* at the ball."

Slode stroked his ridiculous beard thoughtfully, and Elise shrieked with laughter.

" Look here, Elise," he said, " what ball ? "

" Why, the ball you attend to-night. Many gentlemen at the hotel also go. It is at Covent Garden, is it not ? "

They had left the bench and were walking now side by side.

" Ma'm'selle Elise," resumed Slode, after a pause, " what are *you* doing in London ? "

" Oh, I came over six months ago. I have a very good situation. It is in a big hotel, where the housekeeper is French and a great friend of my mother. See, the letter I have is from my mother ; it tells me all the news from poor Hersin-Coupigny and Lens and Bethune. Some of it is very sad. I am so sorry for the poor people. But I am very happy in my place in the bureau where I assist in the accounts and write many letters in French for the manager."

Slode pondered.

" Look here, ma'm'selle, about that ball this evening—how would you like to come with me ? I am alone, you see."

She turned and regarded him with her large grey eyes opened their widest.

" But, Jim ! " she cried, " how is it possible ? I have no *costume de bal*. I have not even a proper dress. *Et puis, alors*, I must ask Madame's permission. If I were not back at twelve o'clock, what would she think ? "

" Don't you be a slave, Elise ! What does it matter what she thinks ? Ain't I an old friend of your mother's ? I'll look after you. You're not afraid of me, Elise ? "

" No-o. But——"

He seized her hand and drew it through his arm. An empty taxi was passing ; he hailed it. A strange feeling was creeping over him, a feeling he did not stop to analyse, the feeling of a swimmer who has been battling overmuch with the breakers and who finds his feet at last touching a sandy bottom, the feeling of an amateur actor who after his first ordeal before a hostile audience, sees the grateful curtain descending. At last he had struck a friend, reviving sweet and gentle memories, the only sweet and gentle memories which had found a lodgment in Slode's bosom for six years or so. In spite of all his bounce and bluff Slode began to wonder if he had not, after all, been a bit " off his chump " lately ! What if this charming girl at his side knew the truth ? What would she think of him ? Wouldn't she run away and leave him as if he were really a ruddy lunatic ?

Well, anyhow, she had given him the means of escape which otherwise his pride would have scorned. He must keep up the illusion.

" Driver, where can a lady buy, hire, or steal a fancy dress at this hour of the evening ? "

The taxi-man grinned.

" Reckon Claxton's would be open, sir. Open till ten or eleven when there's a Covent Garden ball on. Shall I drive there, sir ? "

" As quick as you know how, my lad," returned Slode, assisting Elise into the vehicle.

" If only we could get even a domino," murmured the girl, ecstatically, " it would do. I have always longed to see a great *bal masqué* in your beautiful *Jardin de Couvent !* "

SLODE had brought off his *coup*, but still he wasn't wholly happy. Something seemed to have affected his mentality. In spite of the triumphant success of his own get-up (an exquisite Charles I. had slapped him exuberantly on the back and assured him that he was an " absolute peach "), notwithstanding Elise's radiant joy and her own dainty prettiness as a red, white, and blue vivandière, something seemed to have snapped inside Slode. His recent self-confidence was replaced by a strange diffidence. When Elise insisted on his mingling with the other dancers he did so to please her, and immediately afterwards showed a preference for quiet corners behind screens or palms where

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he could take her little hand in his and make her talk to him about old times at Hersin-Coupigny, where he had taught her English or halma, and she had played a wheezy piano "pinched" from a ruined mansion in Arras or mended his and his comrade's socks and underwear.

AFTER a champagne supper (where Elise, timidly sipping the wine, pronounced it not nearly as sweet as the champagne *renommé* to which Jim had once treated her at the Coq d'Or, in her native village) Slode's spirits greatly improved; but he still shrank from the gaze of the crowd.

"Don't mind me, little girl. I'll sit here and you go and fox-trot with Uncle Sam or Richelieu. Don't mind me. I just like watching you. To me, you're just the sweetest thing that ever happened. No other girl here is a patch on you."

Elise's sheer joy radiated.

"Oh, Jim, I have nevaire been so happy! I could almost cry when you say the othaire girl is not 'one patch.' That is how you speak to me five years ago when we promenade together in the Grand Place of Hersin-Coupigny and shop in the marché."

"I meant it then, too!" declared Slode, and the next moment he had surrendered his little vivandière to the arm of Dick Whittington and stood watching the couple thread their saltatory way through the maze of dancers.

As he stood there he was made perpetually aware that he attracted attention. Such phrases reached his ear, as:—

"Good Lord, dear, look."

"Did you *ever!* What's he supposed to be?—the Mad Hatter?"

He frequently rubbed his forehead with his finger-tips, as if suffering from headache or feverishness. Sometimes his restless eye fastened itself upon his giant-spotted trousers strapped down to his white tennis shoes, with the black spats, and at such times you would have sworn it was a look of disgust which crept over his features. It was as though he were being awakened from a dream and were trying to realize what had happened to him. He regarded the Paris cabman's hat in his hand as if it were an unclean thing which he would like to pitch across the great ballroom. He ran his fingers through his tawny beard and visibly shuddered. The thought occurred to him, "I expect if I'd been a different sort I might after what I've been through have taken to drink. But I took to clothes instead and got drunk on 'em. I've been on a tremendous bust and I guess I'm just sobering up."

He gazed down at his habiliments ruefully. But Elise returned and he brightened up at once. He fetched her an ice, and then another. A quarter of an hour passed, and then a slim young gentleman in correct



"No longer could she restrain her mirth. The

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evening raiment approached the pair where they sat and made a bow.

"Excuse me," he said, deferentially, "but are you 'A.D. 1952'?"

Slode was on his feet like an electrically-worked automaton, just as in the old days, eyes front, chest out, fingers touching the seam of his trousers, and only pulled himself up in time before giving the regulation salute of the private in the ranks when accosted by an officer.

"Ye-es, sir," he stammered. "How did you——?"



The slim young man laughed pleasantly.

"I thought you would like to know that I have just seen the winning list and you are awarded Gentlemen's First Prize."

"Wha-a-at!" ejaculated Slode. Elise clapped her hands joyfully.

"There, Jim, what did I tell you! Now you can be happy. You need not be anxious any more. You have done it. It is splendid —*splendid!*"

Slode collapsed into his seat and closed his eyes, while the young man went on talking.

"I represent the *Morning Gleaner* and would take it as a great favour if you would tell me how you happened to think of this particular costume. Of course, you have made a great hit. I see from the judge's list that you call it 'Anno Domini 1952.'"

Slode roused himself.

"But I don't call it 'Anno Dom——'" A light dawned upon him. "Good Lord, Elise! I see what's happened. When I came in they asked me to give 'em my name—and —and I wrote it down for 'em and must have added my regimental number—A.D. (Army Details, you know) one nine five two. This beats anything I ever heard of. If I stay here much longer, I'll——"

An elderly gentleman, wearing a crimson rosette, advanced, for whom the crowd of dancers made way. Behind him came a couple of waiters laden with various objects which attracted much attention.

"Allow me—Mr. Slode, I think? 'A.D. 1952,' Gentleman's costume. I am happy to inform you that the judges have awarded you first prize, a fitted dressing-case, value £50. Pray accept this with our congratulations. May I at the same time express the hope" (the gentleman was just a trifle pompous) 'that—er—your prognostication

longer she looked at Slode the more she laughed."

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of the dress of our—er—immediate posterity must not—ha, ha!—be accepted too literally?"

Slode and Mlle. Lebrun stood up. It was Élise who took the beautiful dressing-case. Then there ensued a blinding flash, the shutters of half-a-dozen cameras went snap, followed by universal peals of merriment.

The Master of Ceremonies, still smiling at his jest, and the waiters passed on.

"ARE you feeling better now, Jim?"

Slode nodded. He looked at his watch—an ancient gold turnip—and saw that it was nearly two o'clock.

"Do you mind if we go now, Elise?"

"Oh, no, Jim! It is terribly late. I hope Madame will never find out. My domino will cover everything. You can put my street dress in here." Elise roguishly held up the beautiful dressing-case.

"HAVE you far to go, Elise? What is the name of your hotel?"

"*Ma foi*, Jim, have I not told you? It is the Oxford Palace."

"*The Oxford Palace!*"

"Yes. Why are you so surprised? What is your hotel, Jim?"

"Mine?" returned Slode, grimly. "Oh, mine's a mighty long way off. Ever hear of it—the Hôtel de Bivouac?"

"Nevaire. But why do you not take a room for the night at the Oxford Palace? It is so late and you could move to-morrow, if you liked. I can arrange it for you with Martin, the night-porter. He is a great friend of mine."

The taxi duly drew up in front of the entrance of the hotel where not so many hours before had been witnessed Slode's rebuff. The door was closed, but Elise pressed the bell and it swung open, revealing the muscular, rubicund, efficient person of Martin, the Swiss night-porter.

"*Bon soir, M. Martin,*" observed Mlle. Lebrun, affably.

"*Ah, c'est vous, mademoiselle!*" exclaimed the surprised Martin, surprised and pleased, for was not mademoiselle a general favourite in the famous caravanserai?

"Monsieur Martin, let me introduce to you my *fiancé*. We have just returned from the ball at Covent Garden."

"*Enchanté, monsieur.*" Mr. Martin grinned and bowed.

"I think there is a room vacant, is there not, M. Martin?"

"Yes, mademoiselle. One-twenty-eight."

As she spoke Elise removed her belongings from the dressing-case.

"Very good. Show Mr. Slode into it. Good night, Jim, dear. Thank you so much for a very pleasant evening."

The big porter's back was turned. Slode again seized his opportunity. He caught Elise in his arms and kissed her.

"Good night, little girl," he said, tenderly. While closing the receptacle his eye fell eagerly upon the contents ranged within, the various implements in their neat morocco leather sheaths. "Good night, and I promise you I—I'll be my old self to-morrow."

He watched her bound lightly up the broad staircase.

"Thank God, she'll never know!" he muttered softly to himself. "A.D. 1921's good enough for me, *now!*"

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 102.
(*The Second of the Series.*)

THIS is the old-time season of Noël;
That brings you cheer from those who wish you well.

1. A calling this, high-sounding, but plebeian.
2. An epithet of darkness Tartarean.
3. Mere blue or grey, or colour red as roses.
4. Cut out—a custom that our state imposes.
5. The verdant green, making the Wild West smile.
6. Write down in Latin and curtail meanwhile.
7. A realm that, in its centre, owns the king.
8. No end to this, unless it be a sting. EDI.

———

Answers to Acrostic No. 102 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on January 10th.*

To every light one alternative answer may be sent; it should be written at the side. At the foot of his answer every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 101.

SOLVERS and readers, *one* and *two*
This Christmastide we wish to you.

1. His ship with this the sailor guides.
2. Sensation Scottish loch provides.
3. Who picked a peck? First name is here:
4. Now let his second name appear.
5. A British tribe when Rome held sway.
6. A character in Shakespeare's play.
7. River in France must lose its head;
8. And here its tail must go instead.
9. Your daughter's brother and his net
   In fourteen lines of verse are met.

PAX.

1.	H	el	M
2.	A	w	E
3.	P	ete	R
4.	P	ipe	R
5.	I	oen	I
6.	N	y	M
7.	E	in	E
8.	S	ei	N
9.	S	onne	T

NOTES.—Lights 3, 4. Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper. 6. Henry V. 7, 8. Seine.

In No. 99 "Galahalt" (a knight of the Round Table) is accepted for the first light. The third light was inaccurate: Arthur was grandson, not son, of a king. The A.E. much regrets the error, and thinks that all answers to this light must be accepted.

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"'IT TOOK SOME VIOLENCE TO DO THAT,' SAID HOLMES, GAZING AT THE CHIP ON THE LEDGE. WITH HIS CANE HE STRUCK THE LEDGE SEVERAL TIMES WITHOUT LEAVING A MARK. 'YES, IT WAS A HARD KNOCK.'"

(*See page* 103.)

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A NEW SHERLOCK HOLMES STORY

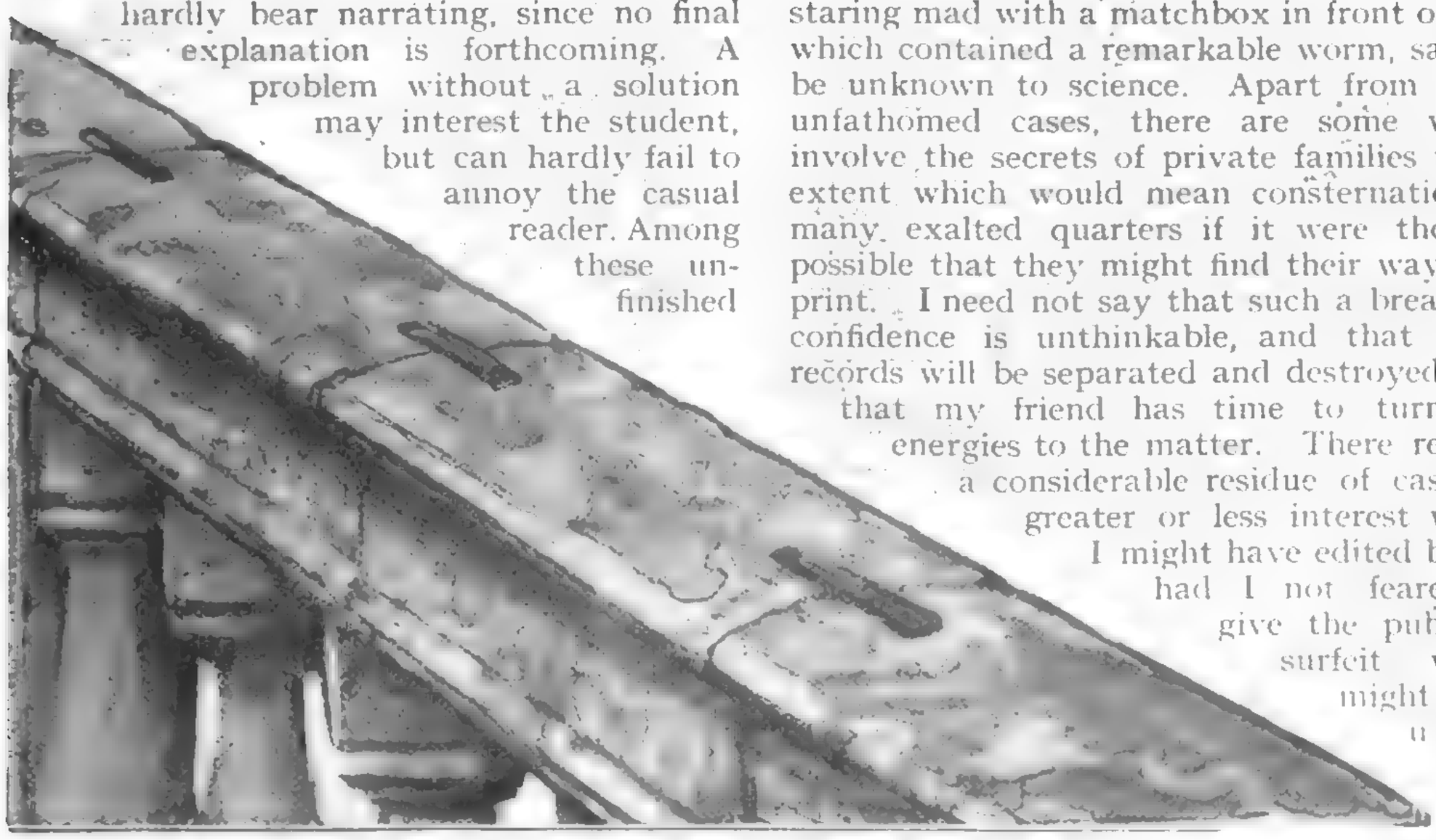
THE PROBLEM OF THOR BRIDGE

by

A·CONAN DOYLE

ILLUSTRATED BY A·GILBERT ROI

SOMEWHERE in the vaults of the bank of Cox and Co., at Charing Cross, there is a travel-worn and battered tin despatch-box with my name, John H. Watson, M.D., Late Indian Army, painted upon the lid. It is crammed with papers, nearly all of which are records of cases to illustrate the curious problems which Mr. Sherlock Holmes had at various times to examine. Some, and not the least interesting, were complete failures, and as such will hardly bear narrating, since no final explanation is forthcoming. A problem without a solution may interest the student, but can hardly fail to annoy the casual reader. Among these unfinished tales is that of Mr. James Phillimore, who, stepping back into his own house to get his umbrella, was never more seen in this world. No less remarkable is that of the cutter *Alicia*, which sailed one spring morning into a small patch of mist from which she never again emerged, nor was anything further ever heard of herself and her crew. A third case worthy of note is that of Isadora Persano, the well-known journalist and duellist, who was found stark staring mad with a matchbox in front of him which contained a remarkable worm, said to be unknown to science. Apart from these unfathomed cases, there are some which involve the secrets of private families to an extent which would mean consternation in many exalted quarters if it were thought possible that they might find their way into print. I need not say that such a breach of confidence is unthinkable, and that these records will be separated and destroyed now that my friend has time to turn his energies to the matter. There remain a considerable residue of cases of greater or less interest which I might have edited before had I not feared to give the public a surfeit which might react upon



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the reputation of the man whom above all others I revere. In some I was myself concerned and can speak as an eye-witness, while in others I was either not present or played so small a part that they could only be told as by a third person. The following narrative is drawn from my own experience.

It was a wild morning in October, and I observed as I was dressing how the last remaining leaves were being whirled from the solitary plane tree which graces the yard behind our house. I descended to breakfast prepared to find my companion in depressed spirits, for, like all great artists, he was easily impressed by his surroundings. On the contrary, I found that he had nearly finished his meal, and that his mood was particularly bright and joyous, with that somewhat sinister cheerfulness which was characteristic of his lighter moments.

"You have a case, Holmes?" I remarked.

"The faculty of deduction is certainly contagious, Watson," he answered. "It has enabled you to probe my secret. Yes, I have a case. After a month of trivialities and stagnation the wheels move once more."

"Might I share it?"

"There is little to share, but we may discuss it when you have consumed the two hard-boiled eggs with which our new cook has favoured us. Their condition may not be unconnected with the copy of the *Family Herald* which I observed yesterday upon the hall-table. Even so trivial a matter as cooking an egg demands an attention which is conscious of the passage of time, and incompatible with the love romance in that excellent periodical."

A QUARTER of an hour later the table had been cleared and we were face to face. He had drawn a letter from his pocket.

"You have heard of Neil Gibson, the Gold King?" he said.

"You mean the American Senator?"

"Well, he was once Senator for some Western State, but is better known as the greatest gold-mining magnate in the world."

"Yes, I know of him. He has surely lived in England for some time. His name is very familiar."

"Yes; he bought a considerable estate in Hampshire some five years ago. Possibly you have already heard of the tragic end of his wife?"

"Of course. I remember it now. That is why the name is familiar. But I really know nothing of the details."

Holmes waved his hand towards some papers on a chair. "I had no idea that the case was coming my way or I should have had my extracts ready," said he. "The fact is that the problem, though exceedingly sensational, appeared to present no difficulty. The interesting personality of the accused does not obscure the clearness of the evidence. That was the view taken by the coroner's jury and also in the police-court proceedings. It is now referred to the Assizes at Winchester. I fear it is a thankless business. I can discover facts, Watson, but I cannot change them. Unless some entirely new and unexpected ones come to light I do not see what my client can hope for."

"Your client?"

"Ah, I forgot I had not told you. I am getting into your involved habit, Watson, of telling a story backwards. You had best read this first."

The letter which he handed to me, written in a bold, masterful hand, ran as follows:—

CLARIDGE'S HOTEL,
October 3rd.

DEAR MR. SHERLOCK HOLMES,—

I can't see the best woman God ever made go to her death without doing all that is possible to save her. I can't explain things—I can't even try to explain them, but I know beyond all doubt that Miss Dunbar is innocent. You know the facts—who doesn't? It has been the gossip of the country. And never a voice raised for her! It's the damned injustice of it all that makes me crazy. That woman has a heart that wouldn't let her kill a fly. Well, I'll come at eleven to-morrow and see if you can get some ray of light in the dark. Maybe I have a clue and don't know it. Anyhow, all I know and all I have and all I am are for your use if only you can save her. If ever in your life you showed your powers, put them now into this case.

Yours faithfully,
J. NEIL GIBSON.

"There you have it," said Sherlock Holmes, knocking out the ashes of his after-breakfast pipe and slowly refilling it. "That is the gentleman I await. As to the story, you have hardly time to master all these papers, so I must give it to you in a nutshell if you are to take an intelligent interest in the proceedings. This man is the greatest financial power in the world, and a man, as I understand, of most violent and formidable character. He married a wife, the victim of this tragedy, of whom I know nothing save that she was past her prime, which was the more unfortunate as a very attractive governess superintended the education of two young children. These are the three people concerned and the scene is a grand old manor house, the centre of an historical English estate. Then as to the tragedy. The wife was found in the grounds nearly half a mile from the house, late at night, clad

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in her dinner dress, with a shawl over her shoulders and a revolver bullet through her brain. No weapon was found near her and there was no local clue as to the murder. No weapon near her, Watson—mark that! The crime seems to have been committed late in the evening, and the body was found by a gamekeeper about eleven o'clock, when it was examined by the police and by a doctor before being carried up to the house. Is this too condensed, or can you follow it clearly?'

'It is all very clear. But why suspect the governess?"

'Well, in the first place there is some very direct evidence. A revolver with one discharged chamber and a calibre which corresponded with the bullet was found on the floor of her wardrobe." His eyes fixed and he repeated in broken words, "On—the—floor—of—her—wardrobe." Then he sank into silence, and I saw that some train of thought had been set moving which I should be foolish to interrupt. Suddenly with a start he emerged into brisk life once more.

'Yes, Watson, it was found. Pretty damning, eh? So the two juries thought. Then the dead woman had a note upon her making an appointment at that very place and signed by the governess. How's that? Finally, there is the motive. Senator Gibson is an attractive person. If his wife dies, who more likely to succeed her than the young lady who had already by all accounts received pressing attentions from her employer? Love, fortune, power, all depending upon one middle-aged life. Ugly, Watson—very ugly!"

"Yes, indeed, Holmes."

'Nor could she prove an alibi. On the contrary, she had to admit that she was down near Thor Bridge—that was the scene of the tragedy—about that hour. She couldn't deny it, for some passing villager had seen her there."

'That really seems final."

"And yet, Watson—and yet! This bridge—a single broad span of stone with balustraded sides—carries the drive over the narrowest part of a long, deep, reed-girt sheet of water. Thor Mere it is called. In the mouth of the bridge lay the dead woman. Such are the main facts. But here, if I mistake not, is our client, considerably before his time."

Billy had opened the door, but the name which he announced was an unexpected one. Mr. Marlow Bates was a stranger to both of us. He was a thin, nervous wisp of a man with frightened eyes, and a twitching, hesitating manner—a man whom my own professional eye would judge to be on the brink of an absolute nervous breakdown.

'You seem agitated, Mr. Bates," said Holmes. "Pray sit down. I fear I can only give you a short time, for I have an appointment at eleven."

'I know you have," our visitor gasped, shooting out short sentences like a man who is out of breath. "Mr. Gibson is coming. Mr. Gibson is my employer. I am manager of his estate. Mr. Holmes, he is a villain—an infernal villain."



"The wife was found in the grounds, late at night, with a revolver bullet through her brain."

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"Strong language, Mr. Bates."

"I have to be emphatic, Mr. Holmes, for the time is so limited. I would not have him find me here for the world. He is almost due now. But I was so situated that I could not come earlier. His secretary, Mr. Ferguson, only told me this morning of his appointment with you."

"And you are his manager?"

"I have given him notice. In a couple of weeks I shall have shaken off his accursed slavery. A hard man, Mr. Holmes, hard to all about him. Those public charities are a screen to cover his private iniquities. But his wife was his chief victim. He was brutal to her—yes, sir, brutal! How she came by her death I do not know, but I am sure that he had made her life a misery to her. She was a creature of the Tropics, a Brazilian by birth, as no doubt you know?"

"No; it had escaped me."

"Tropical by birth and tropical by nature. A child of the sun and of passion. She had loved him as such women can love, but when her own physical charms had faded—I am told that they once were great—there was nothing to hold him. We all liked her and felt for her and hated him for the way that he treated her. But he is plausible and cunning. That is all I have to say to you. Don't take him at his face value. There is more behind. Now I'll go. No, no, don't detain me! He is almost due."

With a frightened look at the clock our strange visitor literally ran to the door and disappeared.

"Well! well!" said Holmes, after an interval of silence. "Mr. Gibson seems to have a nice loyal household. But the warning is a useful one, and now we can only wait till the man himself appears."

SHARP at the hour we heard a heavy step upon the stairs and the famous millionaire was shown into the room. As I looked upon him I understood not only the fears and dislike of his manager, but also the execrations which so many business rivals have heaped upon his head. If I were a sculptor and desired to idealize the successful man of affairs, iron of nerve and leathery of conscience, I should choose Mr. Neil Gibson as my model. His tall, gaunt, craggy figure had a suggestion of hunger and rapacity. An Abraham Lincoln keyed to base uses instead of high ones would give some idea of the man. His face might have been chiselled in granite, hard-set, craggy, remorseless, with deep lines upon it, the scars of many a crisis. Cold grey eyes, looking shrewdly out from under bristling brows, surveyed us each in turn. He bowed in perfunctory fashion as Holmes mentioned my name, and then with a masterful air of possession he drew a chair up to my companion and seated himself with his bony knees almost touching him.

"Let me say right here, Mr. Holmes," he began, "that money is nothing to me in this case. You can burn it if it's any use in lighting you to the truth. This woman is innocent and this woman has to be cleared, and it's up to you to do it. Name your figure!"

"My professional charges are upon a fixed scale," said Holmes, coldly. "I do not vary them, save when I remit them altogether."

"Well, if dollars make no difference to you, think of the reputation. If you pull this off every paper in England and America will be booming you. You'll be the talk of two continents."

"Thank you, Mr. Gibson, I do not think that I am in need of booming. It may surprise you to know that I prefer to work anonymously, and that it is the problem itself which attracts me. But we are wasting time. Let us get down to the facts."

"I think that you will find all the main ones in the Press reports. I don't know that I can add anything which will help you. But if there is anything you would wish more light upon—well, I am here to give it."

"Well, there is just one point."

"What is it?"

"What were the exact relations between you and Miss Dunbar?"

The Gold King gave a violent start, and half rose from his chair. Then his massive calm came back to him.

"I suppose you are within your rights—and maybe doing your duty—in asking such a question, Mr. Holmes."

"We will agree to suppose so," said Holmes.

"Then I can assure you that our relations were entirely and always those of an employer towards a young lady whom he never conversed with, or even saw, save when she was in the company of his children."

Holmes rose from his chair.

"I am a rather busy man, Mr. Gibson," said he, "and I have no time or taste for aimless conversations. I wish you good morning."

Our visitor had risen also and his great loose figure towered above Holmes. There was an angry gleam from under those bristling brows and a tinge of colour in the sallow cheeks.

"What the devil do you mean by this, Mr. Holmes? Do you dismiss my case?"

"Well, Mr. Gibson, at least I dismiss you. I should have thought my words were plain."

"Plain enough, but what's at the back of it? Raising the price on me, or afraid to tackle it, or what? I've a right to a plain answer"

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"I sprang to my feet, for the expression upon the millionaire's face was fiendish in its intensity, and he had raised his great knotted fist. Holmes smiled languidly and reached his hand out for his pipe."

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"Well, perhaps you have," said Holmes. "I'll give you one. This case is quite sufficiently complicated to start with, without the further difficulty of false information."

"Meaning that I lie."

"Well, I was trying to express it as delicately as I could, but if you insist upon the word I will not contradict you."

I sprang to my feet, for the expression upon the millionaire's face was fiendish in its intensity, and he had raised his great knotted fist. Holmes smiled languidly and reached his hand out for his pipe.

"Don't be noisy, Mr. Gibson. I find that after breakfast even the smallest argument is unsettling. I suggest that a stroll in the morning air and a little quiet thought will be greatly to your advantage."

With an effort the Gold King mastered his fury. I could not but admire him, for by a supreme self-command he had turned in a minute from a hot flame of anger to a frigid and contemptuous indifference.

"Well, it's your choice. I guess you know how to run your own business. I can't make you touch the case against your will. You've done yourself no good this morning, Mr. Holmes, for I have broken stronger men than you. No man ever crossed me and was the better for it."

"So many have said so, and yet here I am," said Holmes, smiling. "Well, good morning, Mr. Gibson. You have a good deal yet to learn."

Our visitor made a noisy exit, but Holmes smoked in imperturbable silence, with dreamy eyes fixed upon the ceiling.

"ANY views, Watson?" he asked at last.

"Well, Holmes, I must confess that when I consider that this is a man who would certainly brush any obstacle from his path, and when I remember that his wife may have been an obstacle and an object of dislike, as that man Bates plainly told us, it seems to me——"

"Exactly. And to me also."

"But what were his relations with the governess and how did you discover them?"

"Bluff, Watson, bluff! When I considered the passionate, unconventional, unbusinesslike tone of his letter, and contrasted it with his self-contained manner and appearance, it was pretty clear that there was some deep emotion which centred upon the accused woman rather than upon the victim. We've got to understand the exact relations of those three people if we are to reach the truth. You saw the frontal attack which I made upon him and how imperturbably he received it. Then I bluffed him by giving him the impression that I was absolutely certain, when in reality I was only extremely suspicious."

"Perhaps he will come back?"

"He is sure to come back. He *must* come back. He can't leave it where it is. Ha! isn't that a ring? Yes, there is his footstep. Well, Mr. Gibson, I was just saying to Dr. Watson that you were somewhat overdue."

The Gold King had re-entered the room in a more chastened mood than he had left it. His wounded pride still showed in his resentful eyes, but his common sense had shown him that he must yield if he would attain his end.

"I've been thinking it over, Mr. Holmes, and I feel that I have been hasty in taking your remarks amiss. You are justified in getting down to the facts, whatever they may be, and I think the more of you for it. I can assure you, however, that the relations between Miss Dunbar and me don't really touch this case."

"That is for me to decide, is it not?"

"Yes, I guess that is so. You're like a surgeon who wants every symptom before he can give his diagnosis."

"Exactly. That expresses it. And it is only a patient who has an object in deceiving his surgeon who would conceal the facts of his case."

"That may be so, but you will admit, Mr. Holmes, that most men would shy off a bit when they are asked point-blank what their relations with a woman may be—if there is really some serious feeling in the case. I guess most men have a little private reserve of their own in some corner of their souls where they don't welcome intruders. And you burst suddenly into it. But the object excuses you, since it was to try and save her. Well, the stakes are down and the reserve open and you can explore where you will. What is it you want?"

"The truth."

The Gold King paused for a moment as one who marshals his thoughts. His grim, deep-lined face had become even sadder and more grave.

"I can give it to you in a very few words, Mr. Holmes," said he at last. "There are some things that are painful as well as difficult to say, so I won't go deeper than is needful. I met my wife when I was gold-hunting in Brazil. Maria Pinto was the daughter of a Government official at Manaos, and she was very beautiful. I was young and ardent in those days, but even now, as I look back with colder blood and a more critical eye, I can see that she was rare and wonderful in her beauty. It was a deep rich nature, too, passionate, whole-hearted, tropical, ill-balanced, very different from the American women whom I had known. Well, to make a long story short, I loved her and I married her. It was only when the romance had passed—and it lingered for years—that

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I realized that we had nothing—absolutely nothing—in common. My love faded. If hers had faded also it might have been easier. But you know the wonderful way of women! Do what I might nothing could turn her from me. If I have been harsh to her, even brutal as some have said, it has been because I knew that if I could kill her love, or if it turned to hate, it would be easier for both of us. But nothing changed her. She adored me in those English woods as she had adored me twenty years ago on the banks of the Amazon. Do what I might, she was as devoted as ever.

"Then came Miss Grace Dunbar. She answered our advertisement and became governess to our two children. Perhaps you have seen her portrait in the papers. The whole world has proclaimed that she also is a very beautiful woman. Now, I make no pretence to be more moral than my neighbours, and I will admit to you that I could not live under the same roof with such a woman and in daily contact with her without feeling a passionate regard for her. Do you blame me, Mr. Holmes?"

"I do not blame you for feeling it. I should blame you if you expressed it, since this young lady was in a sense under your protection."

"Well, maybe so," said the millionaire, though for a moment the reproof had brought the old angry gleam into his eyes. "I'm not pretending to be any better than I am. I guess all my life I've been a man that reached out his hand for what he wanted, and I never wanted anything more than the love and possession of that woman. I told her so."

"Oh, you did, did you?"

Holmes could look very formidable when he was moved.

"I said to her that if I could marry her I would, but that it was out of my power. I said that money was no object and that all I could do to make her happy and comfortable would be done."

"Very generous, I am sure," said Holmes, with a sneer.

"See here, Mr. Holmes. I came to you on a question of evidence, not on a question of morals. I'm not asking for your criticism."

"It is only for the young lady's sake that I touch your case at all," said Holmes, sternly. "I don't know that anything she is accused of is really worse than what you have yourself admitted, that you have tried to ruin a defenceless girl who was under your roof. Some of you rich men have to be taught that all the world cannot be bribed into condoning your offences."

To my surprise the Gold King took the reproof with equanimity.

"That's how I feel myself about it now. I thank God that my plans did not work out as I intended. She would have none of it, and she wanted to leave the house instantly."

"Why did she not?"

"Well, in the first place, others were dependent upon her, and it was no light matter for her to let them all down by sacrificing her living. When I had sworn—as I did—that she should never be molested again, she consented to remain. But there was another reason. She knew the influence she had over me, and that it was stronger than any other influence in the world. She wanted to use it for good."

"How?"

"Well, she knew something of my affairs. They are large, Mr. Holmes—large beyond the belief of an ordinary man. I can make or break—and it is usually break. It wasn't individuals only. It was communities, cities, even nations. Business is a hard game, and the weak go to the wall. I played the game for all it was worth. I never squealed myself and I never cared if the other fellow squealed. But she saw it different. I guess she was right. She believed and said that a fortune for one man that was more than he needed should not be built on ten thousand ruined men who were left without the means of life. That was how she saw it, and I guess she could see past the dollars to something that was more lasting. She found that I listened to what she said, and she believed she was serving the world by influencing my actions. So she stayed—and then this came along."

"Can you throw any light upon that?"

THE Gold King paused for a minute or more, his head sunk in his hands, lost in deep thought.

"It's very black against her. I can't deny that. And women lead an inward life and may do things beyond the judgment of a man. At first I was so rattled and taken aback that I was ready to think she had been led away in some extraordinary fashion that was clean against her usual nature. One explanation came into my head. I give it to you, Mr. Holmes, for what it is worth. There is no doubt that my wife was bitterly jealous. There is a soul-jealousy that can be as frantic as any body-jealousy, and though my wife had no cause—and I think she understood this—for the latter, she was aware that this English girl exerted an influence upon my mind and my acts that she herself never had. It was an influence for good, but that did not mend the matter. She was crazy with hatred, and the heat of the Amazon was always in her blood. She might have planned to murder Miss Dunbar—or we will say to threaten her with a gun and so frighten her into leaving us. Then

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there might have been a scuffle and the gun gone off and shot the woman who held it."

"That possibility had already occurred to me," said Holmes. "Indeed, it is the only obvious alternative to deliberate murder."

"But she utterly denies it."

"Well, that is not final—is it? One can understand that a woman placed in so awful a position might hurry home still in her bewilderment holding the revolver. She might even throw it down among her clothes, hardly knowing what she was doing, and when it was found she might try to lie her way out by a total denial, since all explanation was impossible. What is against such a supposition?"

"Miss Dunbar herself."

"Well, perhaps."

Holmes looked at his watch. "I have no doubt we can get the necessary permits this morning and reach Winchester by the evening train. When I have seen this young lady, it is very possible that I may be of more use to you in the matter, though I cannot promise that my conclusions will necessarily be such as you desire."

THERE was some delay in the official pass, and instead of reaching Winchester that day we went down to Thor Place, the Hampshire estate of Mr. Neil Gibson. He did not accompany us himself, but we had the address of Sergeant Coventry, of the local police, who had first examined into the affair. He was a tall, thin, cadaverous man, with a secretive and mysterious manner, which conveyed the idea that he knew or suspected a very great deal more than he dared say. He had a trick, too, of suddenly sinking his voice to a whisper as if he had come upon something of vital importance, though the information was usually commonplace enough. Behind these tricks of manner he soon showed himself to be a decent, honest fellow who was not too proud to admit that he was out of his depth and would welcome any help.

"Anyhow, I'd rather have you than Scotland Yard, Mr. Holmes," said he. "If the Yard gets called into a case, then the local loses all credit for success and may be blamed for failure. Now, you play straight, so I've heard."

"I need not appear in the matter at all," said Holmes, to the evident relief of our melancholy acquaintance. "If I can clear it up I don't ask to have my name mentioned."

"Well, it's very handsome of you, I am sure. And your friend, Dr. Watson, can be trusted, I know. Now, Mr. Holmes, as we walk down to the place there is one question I should like to ask you. I'd breathe it to no soul but you." He looked round as though he hardly dare utter the words. "Don't you think there might be a case against Mr. Neil Gibson himself?"

"I have been considering that."

"You've not seen Miss Dunbar. She is a wonderful fine woman in every way. He may well have wished his wife out of the road. And these Americans are readier with pistols than our folk are. It was *his* pistol, you know."

"Was that clearly made out?"

"Yes, sir. It was one of a pair that he had."

"One of a pair? Where is the other?"

"Well, the gentleman has a lot of fire-arms of one sort and another. We never quite matched that particular pistol—but the box was made for two."

"If it was one of a pair you should surely be able to match it."

"Well, we have them all laid out at the house if you would care to look them over."

"Later, perhaps. I think we will walk down together and have a look at the scene of the tragedy."

This conversation had taken place in the little front room of Sergeant Coventry's humble cottage, which served as the local police-station. A walk of half a mile or so across a wind-swept heath, all gold and bronze with the fading ferns, brought us to a side gate opening into the grounds of the Thor Place estate. A path led us through the pheasant preserves, and then from a clearing we saw the widespread, half-timbered house, half Tudor and half Georgian, upon the crest of the hill. Beside us there was a long, reedy pool, constricted in the centre where the main carriage drive passed over a stone bridge, but swelling into small lakes on either side. Our guide paused at the mouth of this bridge, and he pointed to the ground.

"That was where Mrs. Gibson's body lay. I marked it by that stone."

"I understand that you were there before it was moved?"

"Yes; they sent for me at once."

"Who did?"

"Mr. Gibson himself. The moment the alarm was given and he had rushed down with others from the house, he insisted that nothing should be moved until the police should arrive."

"That was sensible. I gathered from the newspaper report that the shot was fired from close quarters."

"Yes, sir, very close."

"Near the right temple?"

"Just behind it, sir."

"How did the body lie?"

"On the back, sir. No trace of a struggle. No marks. No weapon. The short note from Miss Dunbar was clutched in her left hand."

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"Clutched, you say?"

"Yes, sir; we could hardly open the fingers."

"That is of great importance. It excludes the idea that anyone could have placed the note there after death in order to furnish a false clue. Dear me! The note, as I remember, was quite short. 'I will be at Thor Bridge at nine o'clock.—G. Dunbar.' Was that not so?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did Miss Dunbar admit writing it?"

"Yes, sir."

"What was her explanation?"

"Her defence was reserved for the Assizes. She would say nothing."

"The problem is certainly a very interesting one. The point of the letter is very obscure, is it not?"

"Well, sir," said the guide, "it seemed, if I may be so bold as to say so, the only really clear point in the whole case."

Holmes shook his head.

"Granting that the letter is genuine and was really written, it was certainly received some time before—say one hour or two. Why, then, was this lady still clasping it in her left hand? Why should she carry it so carefully? She did not need to refer to it in the interview. Does it not seem remarkable?"

"Well, sir, as you put it, perhaps it does."

"I think I should like to sit quietly for a few minutes and think it out." He seated himself upon the stone ledge of the bridge, and I could see his quick grey eyes darting their questioning glances in every direction. Suddenly he sprang up again and ran across to the opposite parapet, whipped his lens from his pocket, and began to examine the stonework.

"This is curious," said he.

"Yes, sir; we saw the chip on the ledge. I expect it's been done by some passer-by."

The stonework was grey, but at this one point it showed white for a space not larger than a sixpence. When examined closely one could see that the surface was chipped as by a sharp blow.

"It took some violence to do that," said



"Our guide pointed to the ground. 'That was where Mrs. Gibson's body lay.'"

Holmes, thoughtfully. With his cane he struck the ledge several times without leaving a mark. "Yes, it was a hard knock. In a curious place, too. It was not from above but from below, for you see that it is on the *lower* edge of the parapet."

"But it is at least fifteen feet from the body."

"Yes, it is fifteen feet from the body. It may have nothing to do with the matter, but it is a point worth noting. I do not think that we have anything more to learn here. There were no footsteps, you say?"

"The ground was iron hard, sir. There were no traces at all."

"Then we can go. We will go up to the house first and look over these weapons of

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which you speak. Then we shall get on to Winchester, for I should desire to see Miss Dunbar before we go farther."

MR. NEIL GIBSON had not returned from town, but we saw in the house the neurotic Mr. Bates who had called upon us in the morning. He showed us with a sinister relish the formidable array of firearms of various shapes and sizes which his employer had accumulated in the course of an adventurous life.

"Mr. Gibson has his enemies, as anyone would expect who knew him and his methods," said he. 'He sleeps with a loaded revolver in the drawer beside his bed. He is a man of violence, sir, and there are times when all of us are afraid of him. I am sure that the poor lady who has passed was often terrified."

"Did you ever witness physical violence towards her?"

"No, I cannot say that. But I have heard words which were nearly as bad—words of cold, cutting contempt, even before the servants."

"Our millionaire does not seem to shine in private life," remarked Holmes, as we made our way to the station. "Well, Watson, we have come on a good many facts, some of them new ones, and yet I seem some way from my conclusion. In spite of the very evident dislike which Mr. Bates has to his employer, I gather from him that when the alarm came he was undoubtedly in his library. Dinner was over at eight-thirty and all was normal up to then. It is true that the alarm was somewhat late in the evening, but the tragedy certainly occurred about the hour named in the note. There is no evidence at all that Mr. Gibson had been out of doors since his return from town at five o'clock. On the other hand, Miss Dunbar, as I understand it, admits that she had made an appointment to meet Mrs. Gibson at the bridge. Beyond this she would say nothing, as her lawyer had advised her to reserve her defence. We have several very vital questions to ask that young lady, and my mind will not be easy until we have seen her. I must confess that the case would seem to me to be very black against her if it were not for one thing."

"And what is that, Holmes?"

"The finding of the pistol in her wardrobe."

"Dear me, Holmes!" I cried, "that seemed to me to be the most damning incident of all."

"Not so, Watson. It had struck me even at my first perfunctory reading as very strange, and now that I am in closer touch with the case it is my only firm ground for hope. We must look for consistency. Where there is a want of it we must suspect deception."

"I hardly follow you."

"Well now, Watson, suppose for a moment that we visualize you in the character of a woman who, in a cold, premeditated fashion, is about to get rid of a rival. You have planned it. A note has been written. The victim has come. You have your weapon. The crime is done. It has been workmanlike and complete. Do you tell me that after carrying out so crafty a crime you would now ruin your reputation as a criminal by forgetting to fling your weapon into those adjacent reed-beds which would for ever cover it, but you must needs carry it carefully home and put it in your own wardrobe, the very first place that would be searched? Your best friends would hardly call you a schemer, Watson, and yet I could not picture you doing anything so crude as that."

"In the excitement of the moment——"

"No, no, Watson, I will not admit that it is possible. Where a crime is coolly premeditated, then the means of covering it are coolly premeditated also. I hope, therefore, that we are in the presence of a serious misconception."

"But there is so much to explain."

"Well, we shall set about explaining it. When once your point of view is changed, the very thing which was so damning becomes a clue to the truth. For example, there is this revolver. Miss Dunbar disclaims all knowledge of it. On our new theory she is speaking truth when she says so. Therefore, it was placed in her wardrobe. Who placed it there? Someone who wished to incriminate her. Was not that person the actual criminal? You see how we come at once upon a most fruitful line of inquiry."

(The extraordinary solution of this enthralling problem will appear next month.)

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LOST "BAB BALLADS"

SOME NEW LIGHT ON W. S. GILBERT AND THE SAVOY OPERAS.

By H. ROWLAND BROWN and ROWLAND GREY.

The writers of the following article, who were friends in his later years of Sir W. S. Gilbert, possess an unrivalled knowledge of the man and his methods of work. The "Bab Ballads" here given, which are illustrated by Gilbert's own drawings, were never reprinted in book form, and to most readers will be perfectly new.

OUR charming business here is to draw upon Gilbert's earliest contributions of wit and satire, poured forth in his literary youth, and to show how surely the masterpieces of his maturity have their source in those far-off golden years when all the town awaited the weekly "Bab."

To revert to magenta-bound volumes of the long-deceased *Fun* is not, however, a high road to the discovery of the lost Gilbert. Much he wrote in those pages is unsigned—how much, only we fortunate possessors of his own marked copies can be fully aware, for there are notably countless paragraphs, rarely without a characteristic initial letter, proving him as eager to play the chivalrous champion to the friendless and needy as to draw his glittering rapier against pretence and vulgarity. From the first "his foe was folly and his weapon wit," his heart softer than many guessed. When a girl employed by a fashionable milliner died of overwork, Gilbert attacked her "murderer" by name with burning words. Case after case did he castigate, till cowards learnt to wince under the whip of *Fun*.

Coming events cast their shadows before in such series as the "Comic Physiognomist" and "Men I Have Met" irresistibly portrayed. There is not a line uninteresting to the good Gilbertian, because between them lurk the origins of many a famous ditty. "Bores are of four kinds" may be instanced :—

> "1. Those who neither amuse nor instruct. 2. Those who amuse without instruction. 3. Those who instruct without amusing. 4. Those who profess to combine instruction and amusement."

For each of such "prosy, dull, society sinners" he was, later, to apportion the punishment to "fit the crime."

There are those alive who recall passing the tuck-shop with stoicism in their youth to keep the penny that would ensure a "Bab." Yet Gilbert excuses publication in book form with his invariable modesty, on the ground that the verses sub-titled "Much Sound and Little Sense" "seem to have won a sort of whimsical popularity." "They are not, as a rule, founded on fact," he goes on, demurely. "I have ventured to publish the little pictures with them because, while they are certainly quite as bad as the ballads, I suppose they are not much worse." The pictures are, indeed, beyond criticism. They defy it. They may be technically all wrong; humoristically they are all right.

Alas! it was Gilbert himself who committed the essentially Gilbertian sin of tinkering these classics, for in the last edition he edited during his lifetime his "improvements" broke the spell of cherished illusions. He perpetrated another literary crime even harder to forgive in condemning nearly twenty innocent "Babs" to burial alive. They were not reprinted in the book.

One such—a veritable "Bab" in prose—is "Our Own Pantomime. Harlequin Wilkinson; or The Fairy Pew-Opener and the Vicar of Pendleton-cum-Turnip-Top." Surely no great discernment is required to find distinct suggestions, both of "The Sorcerer" and "Trial by Jury," here.

It is sad that space lacks to quote "Gemma di Vergy," "a five-act play in blank verse suitable for Miss Bateman," for it is noteworthy that Jumbles the Jester gives a hint of the incomparable Jack Point :—

> "JULIA: A murrain on thee, thou fool!
>
> "JUMBLES (*sarcastically*): Nay, it is thou

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that art the fool, and I, Jumbles the Jester, am a wise man.

"GEMMA (*sternly*): This jester has amused me oft by his rare wit.

"JUMBLES (*feeling himself called upon to say something smart*): Then art thou forsworn, and I, the fool, am the wiser of the twain."

THE LOST "BABS."

To pass to the rhymed "Babs," which have become lost because never republished, is at once to perceive their real literary importance. Lear, Calverley, "Bon Gaultier,"



Lewis Carroll, produced flowers of airy fancy which are perennial joys. These, however, are not flowers only. The "Babs" bore fruit—the fruit of the joyous operas compact of the art that conceals art. "The Story of Gentle Archibald," who wanted to be a clown, a cautionary tale Mr. Belloc could not surpass, is among the disinterred. "Archibald the All-Right" of "Patience" might have written it, and its analogy with those dear favourites of that opera, "Teasing Tom" and "Gentle Jane," need no underlining.

My children, once I knew a boy
(His name was Archibald Molloy)
Whose kind papa, one Christmas-time,
Took him to see a pantomime.
He was a mild, delightful boy,
Who hated jokes that caused annoy;
And none who knew him could complain
That Archy ever gave them pain.
But don't suppose he was a sad
Or serious, solemn kind of lad;
Indeed, he was a cheerful son,
Renowned for mild, respectful fun.

But, oh! it was a rueful day
When he was taken to the play;
The Christmas pantomime that night
Destroyed his gentle nature quite;
And as they walked along the road
That led to his papa's abode,
As on they trudged through muck and mire,
He said, "Papa, if you desire
My fondest hopes and joys to crown,
Allow me to become a clown!"
I will not here attempt to show
The bitter agony and woe,
The sorrow and depression dire
Of Archy's old and feeble sire.
"Oh, Archibald," said he, "my boy,
My darling Archibald Molloy!
Attention for one moment lend.
You cannot seriously intend
To spend a roving life in town,
As vulgar, base, dishonest c'own,
And leave your father in the lurch
Who aways meant you for the Church,
And nightly dreams he sees his boy,
'The Reverend Archibald Molloy'!"

That night as Archy lay awake,
Thinking of all he'd break and take
If he but had his heart's desire,
The room seemed filled with crimson fire;
The wall expanded by degrees,
Disclosing shells and golden trees,
Revolving round and round and round:
Red coral strewn upon the ground;
And on the trees, in tasty green,
The loveliest fairies ever seen.
But one, more fair than all the rest,
Came from a lovely golden nest,
And said to the astonished boy,
"Oh, Master Archibald Molloy,
I know the object of your heart!
To-morrow morning you shall start
Upon your rambles through the town
As merry mischief-making clown!"

* * * * *

Next day, when Nurse Amelia called,
To wash and dress her Archibald,
She opened both her aged eyes
With unmistakable surprise
To find that Archy, in the night,
Had turned all red and blue and white



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Of healthy colour not a trace—
Red patches on his little face,
Black horsehair wig, round rolling eyes,
Short trousers of prodigious size,
White legs and arms, with spots of blue,
And spots upon his body, too!
Said she, "Why, what is this, my boy?
My gentle Archibald Molloy!
Your good papa I'll go and tell,
You must be dreadfully unwell,
Although I know of no disease
With any symptoms such as these."

The good old lady turned to go
And fetch his good papa, when, lo!
With irresistible attack
He jumped upon her aged back,



Pulled off the poor old lady's front,
And thrashed her, while she tried to grunt,
"Oh, Archibald, what have you done?
Is this your mild, respectful fun,
You bad, ungentlemanly boy?
Fie on you, Archibald Molloy!"
Some dreadful power unseen, but near,
Still urged him on his wild career,
And made him burn and steal and kill
Against his gentlemanly will.
The change had really turned his brain;
He boiled his little sister Jane;
He painted blue his aged mother;
Sat down upon his little brother;
Tripped up his cousins with his hoop;
Put pussy in his father's soup;
Placed beetles in his uncle's shoe;
Cut a policeman right in two;
Spread devastation round—and, ah!
He red-hot-pokered his papa!
Be sure this highly reckless course
Brought Archibald sincere remorse;
He liked a joke, and loved a laugh,
But was too well-behaved by half—
With too much justice and good sense—
To laugh at other folks' expense.
The gentle boy could never sleep,
But used to lie awake and weep,
To think of all the ill he'd done.
"Is this," said he, "respectful fun?

Oh, fairy, fairy, I would fain
That you should change me back again!
Some dreadful power I can't resist
Directs my once respectful fist.
Change, and I'll never once complain,
Or wish to be a clown again!"

He spoke, and lo! the wretched boy
Once more was Archibald Molloy:
He gave a wild, delighted scream,
And woke—for lo! it was a dream.

GILBERT'S "REJECTED ADDRESSES."

With possibly the exception of "Blabworth-cum-Talkington," an inferior version of 'Sir Macklin," and even more virulent against the strait-laced opposers of Sunday excursions and innocent outdoor pleasures, Gilbert's "Rejected Addresses" alone would have given popularity to a lesser light. "Sir Conrad and the Rusty One" is an instance, with Conrad's battle-cry of "King Harry and Aunt Jane," as he had failed to find a younger fair to dub him knight. "The Sensation Twins" and "The Bandoline Player," "Sir Galahad the Goluptious," are men who should be met in handy volume form. "Fanny and Jenny," severally in love with Spiers and Pond and Bertram and Roberts, make the glad eye not unpersuasively. "The Ghost and His Ladye Love" belong to "Ruddigore," as will be shown, and to the "Prince il Balenie" it is alleged peculiarly romantic interest attaches, as written upon a wedding journey before fortune came to "Bab." It is hard to have to pick and choose, yet surely the portraits of "The Three Bohemian Ones" are equal to any, their story highly instructive:—



A worthy man in every way
Was Mister Jasper Porklebay;
He was a merchant of renown
(The firm was Porklebay and Brown).

Three sons he had, and only three.
But they were bad as bad could be;
They spurned their father's righteous ways,
And went to races, balls, and plays

On Sundays they would laugh and joke,
I've heard them bet, I've known them smoke.
At whist they'd sometimes take a hand;
These vices Jasper couldn't stand.

At length the eldest son, called Dan,
Became a stock tragedian,
And earned his bread by ranting through
Shakespearean parts, as others do.

The second (Donald) would insist
On starting as a journalist,
And wrote amusing tales and scenes
In all the monthly magazines.

The youngest (Singleton his name)
A comic artist he became,
And made an income fairly good
By drawing funny heads on wood.

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And as they trod these fearful ways
(These three misguided Porklebays)
They drew not on their father's hoard—
For Jasper threw them overboard.

Yes—Jasper, grieving at their fall,
Renounced them one, renounced them all.
And lived alone, so good and wise,
At Zion Villa, Clapham Rise.

By dint of work and skilful plan
Old Jasper grew a wealthy man;
And people said, in slangy form,
That Jasper P. would "cut up warm."

He had no relative at all
On whom his property could fall,
Except, of course, his wicked sons,
Those three depraved Bohemian ones.

So he determined he would fain
Bequeath his wealth (despite mortmain),
Freeholds, debenture stock, and all,
To some deserving hospital.

When his intent was known abroad,
Excitement reigned in every ward,
And with the well-experienced throng
Of operators all went wrong.

St. George's, Charing Cross, and Guy's,
And little Westminster likewise,
Bartholomew's and Middlesex,
Combined old Jasper to perplex.



House surgeons, spite of patients' hints,
Bound headaches up in fracture splints:
In measles, strapped the spots that come,
With strips of plain diachylum.

Rare leeches, skilled at fever beds,
For toothache shaved their patients' heads;
And always cut their fingers off
If they complained of whooping cough.

Their zeal grew greater day by day,
And each did all that in him lay
To prove his own pet hospital
The most deserving of them all.

Though Jasper P. could not but feel
Delighted at this show of zeal,
When each in zeal exceeds the rest,
One can't determine which is best.

Interea, his reckless boys
Indulged in low Bohemian joys:
They sometimes smoked till all was blue,
And danced at evening parties, too.

The hospitals, conflicting sore,
Perplexed poor Jasper more and more.
But, ah! ere Jasper could decide,
Poor charitable man, he died.



And Donald, Singleton, and Dan
Now roll in wealth, despite his plan:
So Donald, Dan, and Singleton,
By dint of accident have won.

Vice triumphs here; but, if you please,
It's by exceptions such as these
(From probability removed)
That every standing rule is proved.

By strange exceptions Virtue deigns
To prove how paramount she reigns
A standing rule I do not know
That's been more oft established so.

Nonsense, perhaps, but "Ah, what precious nonsense!" The world without the "Babs" would assuredly be duller.

Gilbert had no ear for music in the accepted sense. He taught a wonderfully clever parrot to whistle "God Save the Queen," or at least his version of it, and it was deplorably flat. But he had a marvellous ear for rhythm, as well as a marvellous memory, and though there

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is said to be one single metrical error in the operas, it is not easy to discover it. This error was the crux of a Gilbert examination paper many years ago in the *Westminster Gazette*. Indeed, he was never so happy as when quoting at length from the old burlesque writers, of whom H. J. Byron was his special favourite; and to the last he could reel off an "Æneid" learnt at school, and reams of Calverley's extremely difficult mnemonics. One who writes here asked him where he got the quaint names of the people of the "Babs." He did not go, as did Balzac and his favourite, Dickens, marking down the names over shops—the Boffins, the Snodgrasses. He said the names came naturally to the rhythm of his verses, and a remarkable collection they are. The illustrations were never begun before the ballad was in form, and from the days of the "Pinafore" onwards—the days when Lord Salisbury joined in its choruses at Hatfield with Disraeli, noting "Pinafore Smith" among the listeners—he provided Sullivan with a choice of lyrics over and above those finally included in the score. Unfortunately these extra pieces do not appear to have been preserved. Gilbert was an inveterate destroyer, and as soon as an opera was completed, even the MS., if not given to the *prima donna* or some other fortunate artist, was consigned to the wastepaper basket.

For a time Gilbert's libretti were in form more or less of the old burlesque. The first in collaboration with Sullivan, "Thespis; or the Gods Grown Old," is of this type. It was written and produced in a month at the Gaiety. But from that time forward Gilbert created his own forms. "I have translated three farces or farcical comedies from the French," he wrote in 1883, "and I have adapted two English works—namely, 'Great Expectations' and 'Ought We to Visit Her?' With these exceptions, all the plays I have written are original."



Some unpublished rough sketches by W. S. Gilbert.

THE FIRST OF THE FAMOUS SERIES.

"Trial by Jury" opens the triumphal series. It is a skit on the then notorious procedure of breach-of-promise actions. The original "set" was adapted from the chief court of the Clerkenwell Sessions House, which had apparently a previous existence as a place of entertainment other than that afforded by Judge and Bar, who were the particular targets for Gilbert's arrows in the pages of *Fun*. Some alterations had to be made in the disposition of the dock and barristers' seats, but the scene as we see it to-day is substantially that of the old court-house closed last year.

Then came "The Sorcerer." Its cradle is in the Christmas number of a bygone *Graphic*, and hints of its development occur in "The Cunning Woman"—"MacCatacombe de Salmoneye was her uncommon name." A long procession of churchmen in the "Babs," gentlemen all, are forerunners of the "pale young curate."

And then the "Pinafore," fresh to-day after its joyous cruise of four-and-forty years. Half-a-dozen "Babs," among them "The Martinet," "The Sensation Captain," "Joe Golightly," supply the motive, beginning with Captain Reece, commander of the *Mantelpiece*, who still holds premier pride of place in all subsequent editions of the Ballads. The model ship from which the set was made still stands in the entrance-hall of Grim's Dyke, and looking on it a vision rises of a far-away afternoon when three naval captains stood before it and the voice of Jellicoe pronounced the

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verdict, "Not a rope wrong." Gilbert enlisted the services of an old salt to adjust the rigging once a year; himself an expert yachtsman, holding a master's certificate, he was as familiar with the rigging and equipment of a three-decker as those admirals-to-be themselves. "Our saucy ship's a beauty," and Captain Corcoran, who appears later in "Utopia" as Sir Edward Corcoran, K.C.B., still proudly walks her quarter-deck. Yet another admiral inspected the doughty warship on the first occasion of the revival of "Pinafore," and here is a letter, dated "Admiralty, December 14, 1887," to the composer:—

> "MY DEAR ARTHUR,—I was perfectly delighted with 'Pinafore' last night—quite excellent. You told me to tell you anything I saw which offended the eye of an expert. Don't be X. They are minor details, but make the difference in perfection and not absolute perfection. [Then follow suggestions on improved rigging, manning the yards, etc. These are a few details, the rest is quite excellent.
>
> "Yours ever,
>
> "CHARLIE BERESFORD."

Success at sea was clearly another link between Gilbert and his great ancestor.

"The Pirates of Penzance" in its inception is a travesty of the old melodrama which survived the date of its production principally in the toy theatres with cardboard characters Gilbert loved from his earliest boyhood. We often discussed the fascination of these "penny plain, tuppence coloured" sheets which emanated from the purlieus of Old St. Luke's, and the make-up of the Pirate King was surely suggested by the brigand chief who swaggered and strutted before the tin oil-footlights in the Theatres Royal of our youth.

GILBERT'S METHOD OF WORKING.

Gilbert's love of the theatre, indeed, dates from his earliest boyhood, and he wrote the plays for himself up to the cardboard characters. At school in the 'forties at Ealing, he wrote and produced plays for his schoolfellows. Unfortunately there is no scrap of paper containing these first essays. But a "toy" theatre, or, rather, the stage, remained part of his author's stock-in-trade, and on it were manœuvred and rehearsed the positions of a little army of wooden blocks representing principals and chorus. Gilbert, indeed, harking back to classic precedent, was the first to assign intelligent interest and action to the chorus. The chorus plays a most important part in the operas, and is no mere group of automatons swaying backwards and forwards on one toe, wholly indifferent to the actions of the persons of the drama. The Policeman's chorus in the "Pirates" is a classic. The "Babs" abound in policemen, for whom, both in prose and verse, he had a marked partiality. A bishop and a head-master of a great public school have, to our knowledge, recently collaborated in a Latin version of "When constabulary duty's to be done," and Gilbert often chuckled at the idea of the sixth-form boy required to turn his stanzas into hexameters and iambics.

"Patience," the first of the operas to be produced at the Savoy Theatre, is only linked to the "Babs" by "Gentle Archibald," as aforesaid. It was inspired by the æsthetic movement of the time (1881), when Gilbert's friend, George du Maurier, was holding up South Kensington to gentle ridicule in *Punch*—"good taste misplaced." The make-up of the ladies after Botticelli in the later revivals is therefore warranted, as well as more effective than that adopted in the earlier representations. Gilbert has been criticized unfavourably as harsh to old age, and the criticism is based largely on the song put into the mouth of Lady Jane in this opera. Anyone who takes the trouble to read the lyric, "Silvered is the raven hair," and others of similar nature, will find the satire directed, not against old age, but against the mature who play at youth—mutton dressed as lamb. For this dish he had no liking.

In "Iolanthe," the only opera of which the original notes, sketches, and scenarios exist, to our knowledge, Gilbert returns with renewed vigour to an idea crystallized in the "Babs" of a fairy wedded to a mortal, whose offspring partakes corporeally of both parents. In the "Babs" the father is an attorney; in the opera, after several incarnations as stockbroker and attorney, he blossoms out into the "highly susceptible Chancellor." Gilbert invariably rehearsed chorus and principals. We remember him at the dress rehearsal of an "Iolanthe" revival imploring the procession of peers to "wear their coronets as if they were used to them." It has been said that he never entered the theatre after the first night. This is as foolish a fable as that during first nights he paced the Embankment in a state of abject nervous excitement. As a matter of fact, he was usually to be found at the Beefsteak Club at such moments.

"Princess Ida" cannot be better described than by the author himself. "A respectful operatic version of Tennyson's Princess." He had already been attracted to the Laureate's poem in pre-Savoy days, making of it "a whimsical allegory."

THE ALL-CONQUERING "MIKADO."

"The Mikado" followed. It has no discoverable prototype in Gilbert's realm of topsy-turvydom, whether in the "Babs" or

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elsewhere. It has been played all over the world and in many languages. A time-worn telegram signed "Malet" (Ambassador) announces its immediate success in Berlin, as in Budapest. The only unoriginal lyrics are the Japanese. These, or at least the foundations of the choruses built to usher in his Imperial Majesty, were furnished by the Hon. B. Mitford, afterwards Lord Redesdale, then in the British Legation at Tokio.

The brilliancy of "The Mikado" perhaps rather overshadowed "Ruddigore." At all events, the run of the piece was shorter than was customary at the Savoy. It has its origin in one of the "German Reed Entertainments" written by Gilbert in the 'sixties —"Ages Ago," where ancestors also stepped from their frames. A forecast of the famous Ghost Song of the second act occurs in *Fun*, with a characteristic illustration:—

Fair phantom, come!
The moon's awake.
The owl hoots gaily from its brake,
The blithesome bat's awing.
Come, soar to yonder silent clouds,
The ether teems with peopled shrouds:
We'll fly the lightsome spectre crowds,
Thou cloudy, clammy thing!



Two unpublished sketches by W. S. Gilbert.

And there is a further "Bab" hint in the "Modest Couple," descriptive of the carryings on of Peter and Sarah Bligh. To resume the ridiculous after the sublime, when the ghosts have returned to their frames, was evidently a matter of concern to author and composer. On the day after the production, January 22nd, 1887, Gilbert writes:—

"38, Harrington Gardens,
"23rd January, 1887.

"DEAR SULLIVAN,—I can't help thinking that the second act would be greatly improved if the recitation before Grossmith's song were omitted, and the song reset to an air that would admit of his singing it desperately—almost in a passion—the torrent of which would take him off the stage at the end. After the long and solemn ghost scene, I fancy a lachrymose song is out of place, particularly as it is followed by another slow number—the duet between Jessie and Barrington. I feel this so strongly that I send this by hand, so that if you are of my opinion the matter could be put in hand at once, and perhaps sung on Wednesday next. The *Observer* is kindly.

"Yours truly,
"W. S. GILBERT.

"P.S.—I will call and talk it over this afternoon at three if you like."

GILBERT'S FAVOURITE OPERA.

Gilbert's industry was as ready as his wit. In "The Yeomen of the Guard" he strikes out in a new direction altogether. Confessedly Gilbert's favourite, it sounds a note of pathos wanting to its predecessors, but by no means always to the Gilbertian Muse. In it we have to deal with men of flesh and blood, not delightful fairies and whimsicalities; and the women are real—a very rare occurrence in the operas. Indeed, it is remarkable how the male element predominates throughout the series. The "Yeomen" contains one of the most exquisite lyrics in the language —the song of Fairfax, "Is Life a Boon?" fit to rank high—a true Elizabethan—in our selectest anthologies.

The sweet serious mood did not last long. In "The Gondoliers" "Bab" is back at his old pranks: changeling babes—a constant "Bab" *motif*—and universal topsy-turvydom; the gondolier boatmen-monarchs blacking their own boots, and Grand Inquisitors cutting discreet capers with pretty contadine.



"AN ARTIST AND A GENTLEMAN."

Naturally reticent and proud, with the artistic temperament brought to its highest pitch, he had a reputation wholly unmerited for aloofness and mordant bitterness of tongue. True, he had a rooted hatred for pretence and ostentation, a perfect disdain for meanness and miserliness. In his library there stood, and yet stands, a full-length statuette of Thackeray, for whose character and personality he had the deepest respect. Indeed, to a great extent, as a young man he seems to have modelled his attitude towards morality and art on that of the author of "Vanity Fair." Thackeray was detested by the snob of his day—so was Gilbert. But he once said he never said a hard thing of anyone who did not deserve the castigation.

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MUSTARD-POT—MATCHMAKER

BY

GILBERT FRANKAU

Illustrated by Gilbert Holiday.

I.

"MY dear Victor, why not admit that you funked the place—and let it go at that?" Naomi Braunston flicked the lash of her heavy hunting-crop scientifically at a twig in the leafless hedgerows, re-coiled the thong round her hand, and trotted off—rising squarely as a man from her man's saddle—into the gathering twilight.

For a moment her companion thought to follow. Then, changing his mind, he walked his tired roan on up the hill. A flush deep as the mud-flecked scarlet of his hunting-coat mantled his wind-tanned cheeks. Under the auburn of the cropped moustache, his fine teeth bit on the lower lip. His eyes, steel-blue beneath the black brim of the high silk hat, were the eyes of a shamed schoolboy.

And perhaps it *was* schoolboyish for a man of thirty-eight with Victor's service record to take such a remark seriously. But when you happen to have been born in the very centre of that particular England which folk call "The Shires"; when, from the hour you first straddled a Shetland pony no bigger than the stable mastiff to the day you came back twice wounded and four times decorated from the conquered Rhine, everything you thought worth living for (and fighting for, and, if necessary, dying for) has been comprised in the three syllables of the word "fox-hunting"; when you're "damned if you know what to do with yourself" from the time of the "stinking violets" to the time when the "dahlias are dead"; when the only music you love is the high note of hounds breaking covert on a breast-high scent, and all the pictures you care to see are the pictures a man may espy from the back of a mettlesome horse as he follows the speeding pack; when, all about you, for forty hard-riding miles on either side, neither man, woman, nor child worries if you be lord or steeple-chase jock, poet or profiteer, so long as you go straight at your fences and don't gallop more than absolutely necessary over Farmer Thompson's wheat; and when—in addition to all these things—you happen to be Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Victor Plowright Lomondham, Baronet, Royal Horse Artillery (retired), of Lomondham Hall, Leicestershire, and Charles Street, Mayfair, with thirty thousand pounds a year inherited income, a moderate conceit of yourself, and an immoderate desire to share both with your neighbour's daughter Naomi—then, quite conceivably, you allow that kind of remark, especially from her, to rankle.

Besides—and this was the worst of it—the remark happened to be true. Victor Lomondham—as he now admitted to his private soul—had funked not only the particular place of which Naomi spoke, a double-oxer with a nastyish ditch on the take-off side and a still nastier one on the landing, but half a hundred other leaps during the last half-dozen weeks. Ever since the opening meet of the season—to be perfectly frank with himself—he had been "going like a pair of boots." Something, some Peculiar Thing, seemed to have got hold of him. To-night, riding at a snail-pace toward the lights of his home, Lomondham knew, for the first time, that the name of that Peculiar Thing must be "Fear."

And at that he thought, grimly, "Afraid! Me! Good God, this won't do—this won't do at all." It seemed almost incredible that, after five years of warfare—years during which, inwardly, he had so often scoffed at others "getting the wind up"—Fear should have singled *him* out, in the hunting-field of all places, for its victim. Yet the incredible had to be faced. "I *am* afraid," he thought. "I'm scared stiff of my own gee-gees."

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The roan, as though in confirmation of his master's newly-acquired self-knowledge, stumbled—sending the rider's heart into his mouth. Lomondham damned the beast, damned himself for his injustice (no horse stumbles on purpose), and so came past the lodge-gates of Lomondham Hall, round the drive, into the great quadrangle of his stables. As he dismounted a boy ran to take the horse, and Walters, the stud-groom—a burly, clean-shaven worthy who had been in the Lomondhams' service all his life—approached with touched cap and a deferentially cheerful: "How did it go after the change, Sir Victor?"

"Pretty fair, thanks, Walters." Lomondham stamped his booted feet on the gravel, and the pair of them followed the tired nag under the stable archway—for the habits of the Regular Army are not lightly discarded, nor was the master of Lomondham Hall one of those who leave the care of their horses to underlings, however trustworthy those underlings may appear to be.

II.

HUNTING over for the day, his hour in "Stables" had always been Lomondham's supreme and particular joy. But this evening—and weariness, even after the hardest galloped run, was rare with him—he felt weary, almost too weary to make his usual round. Yet the physical fatigue in him seemed paltry when compared with the mental unease.

Breaking one of his own stable-rules, he lit himself a cigarette, and began to pace—the silent stud-groom at his elbow—disconsolately down the red-brick-floored, electric-lit corridors, opening each door as he came to it, entering here, merely peering in there, while the rugged occupants of the odorous stalls stamped and whinnied to his known approach.

Two dozen first-class horses there were at Lomondham Hall—as fine a string of hunters as the poorest hunting-man ever dreamed of in his poverty; and master and stud-groom visited two-and-twenty of them, from Quicksilver, the chestnut pony with the white stockings, who had leaped Little Overdine Brook clean from poached bank to poached bank on the day when Farmer Thompson's cart-horses and tackle-chains had worked till dusk dragging bogged thoroughbreds from the mire, past the two grey Arabs, Selim and Ali, whose tails stuck up like gigantic ostrich-feathers, and whose actions were smooth as a cat's canter over turf, to the slim seventeen-hand Nigger Princess, with her ears bent wickedly backwards, the whites of her eyeballs gleaming, and her hind hoofs itching to lash out at the visitors.

It was on Nigger Princess—quiet as a lamb once mounted but a devil unleashed in stables—that Victor, just before "change of horses," had funked the "place" of which Naomi spoke; and he stood watching the mare for a long while, wondering whether she too realized her master's cowardice.

"About to-morrow, Sir Victor?" interrupted Walters, anxious for his tea.

"Selim and Ali's turn, isn't it? I sha'n't need the car——" Lomondham stopped, chewing at his moustache. To-morrow, thank the Lord! would be an easy day—the meet practically at his own gates, the country known to a post, Selim and Ali—rides for a baby.

"Very good, Sir Victor." Walters, his duties almost over for the day, made a slight movement towards the last two loose-boxes, from one of which came the hiss and scrape of the stable-boy cleaning the roan. But his master halted him with a sharp, "Walters! Did you have Mustard-Pot shod this morning?"

"Yes, Sir Victor."

"Good. I'll have a look at him."

Master, a vague idea simmering at the back of his mind, and man, concealing his annoyance, made their way to the end loose-box of all, clicked on the light, opened the high grilled door, and passed in.

The first peculiarity which struck the observer's eye about Mustard-Pot was his colour; the next his size. Stripped of his rugs, the enormous horse, standing prehistoric in the glare of the naked light-bulb above his manger, showed as near butter-yellow as a steed can be and live. In build, he might have been model to some equine sculptor of the gigantically symbolic. Judging from the slope of his huge shoulders, from the set of his lean pasterns, from the muscled swell of his gaskins, and the sinuous perfection of his hocks, any man might have said to himself—as Lomondham had said when he bought him, preternaturally cheap at a little-frequented show: "Here is the leaper of the world!"

And as a fact, in cold blood, over schooling-fences or the bar, Mustard-Pot could have held his own, and more than his own, with a kangaroo. As a show-jumper, he had no equal; as a hack, his paces and his temper were no less perfect than his appearance was bizarre. It was only in the hunting-field—and possibly on the steeplechase course, though Victor, who at that period of his life hated racing, had never tried the experiment—that Mustard-Pot became entirely unmanageable. Whether, according to stable-legend, the animal had circus-blood in him, and could only perform in a ring; whether he suffered from that obscure human complaint known as "crowd-panic"; or whether, in the words of Tom Sampey, the Little Overdine horse-breaker whom he had brought

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back white and shaking like a leaf after a three-mile bolt up and down the stiffest country in the Vale of Screever, "The trouble with him is that he's got a nose like a hound and follows scent on his own"—appeared to Mustard-Pot's owner, as he ground one spurred heel pensively into the clean peat-moss litter, the most unprofitable of speculations. Remained, as solid certainty, only the fact that if—instead of Selim—he rode the yellow horse on the morrow, nobody, not even Naomi, could accuse him of funking.

"I think I'll give the Arabs a day off," he said, tersely. "We'll make it Mustard-Pot first, Quicksilver second"; and leaving the stud-groom to astonished speculation and the re-rugging of the horse, strode off.

III.

THE dwelling-house of Lomondham Hall, a vast brown-stone pile, tall of chimney-stack and mullioned of window, backed by the great oaks and green rides of Lomondham Wood, and fronted, mile upon mile, by the terracing down-sweep of Lomondham Vale, is separated from the stables by a good three hundred yards of gravel drive and shrubbery—distance enough, if a man take it slowly, for him to change his mind more than once. But Victor, having given his order to the stud-groom, did not turn back.

He came—a tall, powerful figure, the last person in the world one would have suspected of "nerves"—between the tall opal lights either side the open front door, up the steps, and into the big square galleried hall. He handed his hat, his gloves, and his hunting-crop to his waiting valet; he sank into his big chair by the blazing fire; he permitted himself to be served with tea and muffins from massive Georgian silver; he patted his rough-haired terrier with a firm, capable hand; and went up the balustered staircase to his warmed bathroom as coolly as any other millionaire aristocrat without a care in the world save his own enjoyment.

Yet, inwardly, Sir Victor Plowright Lomondham, of Lomondham Hall, knew himself all one shivering apprehension. Dressing for dinner, in the beamed Tudor bedroom, he remembered the Biblical phrase, "His bowels turned to water"; and found it amazingly applicable to the morrow. Dining, alone with his gloomy pictured ancestors, the men-servants manœuvring like trained shadows behind his back, it seemed to him that the foods were tasteless, the wine soured in his mouth. In the smoking-room—dinner over, whisky-and-soda at his elbow, a cigar between his teeth—he fell to wondering why, for the past month, he had never invited a guest.

Then he grew introspective; and in this mood of introspection, a mood never before experienced, he thought, suddenly, "I'm lonely, the most damnably lonely fellow in the world."

From which—and this, perhaps, furnishes the psychological diagnosis that a nerve-doctor, had Sir Victor ever dreamed of consulting one, would have made on his mental condition—the baronet's thoughts switched, longingly, to Naomi. Vividly and acutely he became conscious of her—of the long lithe limbs, breeched knees gripping saddle, booted feet thrust home in the stirrup-irons; of the broad shoulders and the deep bosom which the riding-coat hid without concealing; of the hands capable as his own; of the fine little head, beclustered with darkling tresses; of the eyes, big and jet-black under jet-black brows; and the red ripe fullness of those lips which had said to him: "You funked the place—let it go at that."

Followed, hot on the heels of this sudden vision, a rage of self-questioning. Even admitting that he had "got the wind up" in the hunting-field, what the devil difference did that make to his marrying Naomi? Hadn't hundreds, thousands of other men been forced—sooner or later—to give up riding in the "first flight"? Didn't a man's nerve, naturally, break down when he reached a certain age? Weren't there cases of steeple-chase jockeys, fellows cool as cucumbers in the hell-for-leather leap-and-gallop between the flags of a marked and prepared course, who didn't dare—simply didn't dare—ride straight to hounds across a couple of miles of cut-and-laid and ridge-and-furrow? Didn't a chap's nerve come back, come back quite miraculously, if only he took a really good toss over timber? And, finally—finally, wouldn't Naomi, the very moment she saw him on Mustard-Pot, realize that her taunt had been unjust, and apologize for it?

That imagined apology, you see, was the real crux of the whole business. Lomondham had been on the verge, on the very verge of proposing. But a man, a man of his temperament and outlook, couldn't very well propose to a girl who—who had the whip-hand of him. In matrimony as in life, the master of Lomondham Hall must be top-dog; capable of controlling his woman as of controlling his staff and his gee-gees.

Many a man, by the way, has broken his neck in the hunting-field for far less reason!

IV.

LOMONDHAM, according to custom, left the smoking-room at half-past ten to the tick; dismissed his valet at ten-forty-five; got into bed at five minutes to eleven—and never slept a wink till 4 a.m. Alternately, through the long restless hours,

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"Good morning, Victor. So Tom managed to break Mustard-Pot for you, did he?"

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Naomi, Nigger Princess, and Mustard-Pot haunted him; and when at long last he did sleep, the yellow horse gallopaded through his dreams—dreams in which he heard himself praying, voicelessly to the heedless gods, for a frost severe enough to stop hunting for ever and ever, amen. Morning, however, brought neither frost nor storm; but a greyly perfect winter's day, almost warm and with hardly a breath of wind.

Morning, too, brought its mental reaction; so that it seemed to Naomi's lover, sitting down spurred and scarlet-clad to his ample breakfast, as though the night had never been. His mood of the moment was sheer recklessness—that particular kind of recklessness which is so often mistaken for true courage. He thought, a little bombastically: "I'll show that saffron quadruped, I'll show Naomi Braunston, who is master."

And this mood of swaggering recklessness—a mood as foreign to the real poised Lomondham as the introspection of the night before—endured all through breakfast-time, all through his post-breakfast cigar and his half-hour with his newspaper in the bow-windowed library, right up to the very moment when—at ten-thirty to the second—Mustard-Pot's big hoofs halted on the gravel drive. Then, abruptly, "nerves" once more had their way with him.

Neither his hands, as—his gleaming silk hat already on his head—he took his buckskin gloves and his short-handled long-thonged crop from his man; nor his white-breeched, top-booted legs—as he stood on the broad steps looking down at the saddled horse—actually trembled: yet, to prevent them from trembling took every ounce of his self-control. He wanted to say to Walters, whose curiosity had not been able to resist the temptation of allotting himself the post of second horseman for the day, and who was even now wondering whether he should ask permission or simply go back to the stables and bring Quicksilver on: "I've changed my mind." He wanted to tell the stable-boy at the horse's head: "Take that brute away; and bring Selim round as quickly as ever you can."

Instead, he went slowly down the broad stone steps; gentled the steady yellow muzzle; cast a quick eye over girthing and bridling; let out a link of the burnished curb-chain; thrust his foot into the iron; swung himself to saddle with a terse, "You needn't hold his head as if he were going to eat you, lad," to the stable-boy; gave Walters his orders about Quicksilver—and set off down the drive as though the curious domestic heads peering from the various windows did not exist.

All the same, when Mustard-Pot—apparently the gentlest creature ever foaled—stepped daintily between the lodge-gates, Mustard-Pot's rider felt acutely self-conscious. With his terror—for now that he was actually astride that vast butter-coloured back, only terror describes his emotion—mingled a peculiar pride. For the first time in his life he wanted, not merely to do things for the pleasure of doing them, but so that others, particularly Naomi, should be witnesses of his accomplishment.

Nor were spectators lacking to gratify the man's desire! Already, a mile from Lomondham Ruffs, immaculate limousines occupied by immaculate sportsmen, fat farmers in grunting Fords, slim farmers' wives in smart traps, grooms with two horses and grooms with one, men in pink frock-coats and men in black cut-aways, bowler-hatted girls astride and top-hatted women in side-saddles, boys on ponies and greybeards on cobs, folk on foot and folk on push-bikes, came crowding along the road and along the grass at road-side.

But now, Lomondham's thoughts were all for the great horse. The great horse, already conscious of the chase, had pricked his ears. His neck arched to the reins. He tossed at his bit. His clipped skin twitched and twitched. His gentle walk became an amble. He began to dance among the crowd. The foot-folk drew to hedge-side. A hunting-mother shepherding two flapper daughters cursed "that ass Lomondham, who ought to know better than to bring circus-horses into the hunting-field."

Victor—his terror momentarily in abeyance—managed to simmer the horse down just as Naomi on a big grey and her father on a fat dun trotted slowly out of the bridle-path from Little Lomondham on to the high-road.

She greeted him easily: "Good morning, Victor. So Tom Sampey managed to break Mustard-Pot for you, did he? I'm so glad. He *is* a topper." Her father said: "Hallo, Lomondham. Going to give us all a lead, what?"

Lomondham looked at the big black-eyed, black-moustached landowner, at his tall black-eyed, black-tressed daughter; and answering, "Yes, it's a good thing we've broken him to hounds at last," wondered what the devil *would* happen when hounds actually appeared.

Then Mustard-Pot began dancing again, and he had no time to think, no opportunity to observe that sudden flash of terrified understanding in the girl's eyes.

V.

FROM the western edge of Lomondham Ruffs—a twenty-acre patch of gorse through which the green rides cut straight as cricket-pitches—three hundred horsemen

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and horsewomen listened to the shrill music of hounds to scent, listened for the twang of the silver horn and the loud "Gone away" which signals a fox pushed from covert. But the three-hundred-and-first horseman listened not at all.

Mustard-Pot, at first sight of the pack jig-jogging up the road, had been mad enough; now, hearing them, he seemed to have gone utterly crazy. The gentle hack had disappeared; in its place was a snorting, plunging, rearing, buck-jumping, pig-jumping saffron maniac whose one idea seemed to be to fling his rider out of the saddle and join the hounds on his own. Lomondham, wrenching at the near reins as a man wrenches at the tiller of a racing-yacht, had just managed to draw away from the rest of the field; and was still managing—though every leap of the crazed animal sapped a little more of his strength—to hold him from bolting into the gorse. Curiously enough, the man's terror had disappeared. Clinging—thigh, knee, and calf—to the smooth ox-hide; cursing—as only hunting-men can curse—at the back of Mustard-Pot's heedless ears; giving him every inch of rein he dared, yet conscious that the inch too much would mean disaster; swaying to him as he spun like a top; leaning back to him as he buckjumped, and forward, feet scarcely touching the irons, as he reared—he thought only: "Why don't the fox break? Why the devil don't he break?" Nerves, love, pride, self-consciousness—all these had momentarily disappeared from Victor's mind. He was just a horseman; fighting for mastery; feeling—with each pitched second—that mastery at ebb from his hands and body; feeling the demon under him grow stronger and always stronger to his own weakness; knowing instinctively that his one chance, his one and only chance of ultimate victory lay in letting Mustard-Pot have his head and gallop till the power went out of his jaw-bones.

Mustard-Pot gave one last frantic buck, head between forelegs, hind heels high in air—and abruptly, from beyond The Ruffs, came the twang-twang of the huntsman's horn, the roared "Gone away—gone away" of a galloping whipper-in. Looking about him, in the second of time his horse allowed, Lomondham saw the rest of the field preparing to follow—an orderly stampede of horsemen and horsewomen, thrusters pushing to the front, second-flighters hanging back, wise ones rounding the gorse and weak ones making for road or bridle-paths. Then he gave the yellow gelding his head.

It wasn't a case of "cutting down the field." Mustard-Pot, once loosed, went past the swiftest of them like a torpedo-boat past fishing-smacks; and as he went—green turf thudding under him, black turf flying from his flying heels—panic, the sheer panic of Things Uncontrollable, entered once again into his rider. Instinctively, Lomondham knew that the fox would make due east for Saxenham; instinctively, a map of the country beyond The Ruffs flashed through his mind; instinctively, he tried to steer Mustard-Pot to the right, away from the most dangerous line in all the Vale.

But Mustard-Pot's long-cheeked curb might have been a watering-bridle. Straight for The Ruffs he made—his speed increasing with every gigantic bound; straight across them he went—his rider, feet back, body forward in the saddle—seeing rabbit-holes and bramble slide under and past them as ground slides past and under the mounting 'plane.

AND now, as they flew for the far edge of The Ruffs, all hope went from Victor. At that pace no horse could hope to come safe across the one stone wall in the Vale, and up the big bank beyond the wall, and down the bank into Tupper's Lane. There was nothing—nothing in all the world to do save sit down, and sit still, and pray that the fall would throw him clear. As for hounds, fox, whippers-in, or huntsman—Lomondham had forgotten clean about them.

But Mustard-Pot had not forgotten. Mustard-Pot's keen ears heard, away beyond the high thing his fiery eyes had just perceived, the music of the pack. Lomondham, still praying, felt the mad pace slacken for the fraction of seconds; saw the jagged top of the wall racing at him; felt the saddle rise between his thigh-bones, as the horse gathered hocks under belly for the leap; glimpsed the jagged wall-top flash below; knew one danger safely over-past; was conscious of the man-tall bank ahead, of Mustard-Pot hurling himself to top of it, of Mustard-Pot poised for the down-spring, of the green lane below and a grey thoroughbred checking in the lane, of his own back touching Mustard-Pot's croup as they alighted, and of the twelve-foot bullfinch—impenetrable as barbed wire—a bare six inches from his nose.

How horse and rider went through that bullfinch, Naomi, mud-splashed to the eyes, never knew. *She* merely saw Victor's scarlet crop-arm fling up to shield his face, and the yellow horse charge head down at the interlaced thorns, buck his way into them, and disappear to a crashing of wood and a thudding squelch of steel plates among rotten leaves and stagnant water. As for Lomondham, he could see nothing. He was conscious only of a million cats trying to scratch the skin from his face, the clothes from his body, and of a million claws trying to drag him backwards over the cantle. Then

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"How horse and rider went through, Naomi,

—hat snapped from its cord, left spur wrenched off its strap, one pink coat-tail left in the hedge and the other torn to tatters—he was through and in sight of the pack.

The pack, in full cry and so close on each other's sterns that they looked like one hound, were three good fields ahead; the huntsman and a whipper-in, alone in their glory, one. A little of his old coolness came back to Lomondham. The going—uphill across the switchback of deep furrows and high ridges which had been ploughland in Cromwell's day—steadied Mustard-Pot's stride; and glancing over his right shoulder, Mustard-Pot's rider could see half-a-dozen horsemen pelting to be level with him. He thought, vaguely: "By gad, that was a short-cut with a vengeance. We're giving 'em all a lead." Then he thought of Naomi's grey, checking in the lane—and shivered in his saddle at the realization that he might have jumped clean on top of it.

Followed realization of the fence ahead—a double post-and-rails with a thorn-filled ditch on the far side. Mustard-Pot gathered speed, hurling himself across the ridge-and-furrow. The wind of their going whipped through Lomondham's hair. Fifty yards from the timber he took a pull at his reins. But the yellow horse raced on unheeding, balanced himself in mid-career, and, clearing the obstacle with feet to spare, saw the two scarlet coats ahead.

No holding the lunatic yet! Still uphill, still over ridge-and-furrow, he tore like a steed possessed. The two scarlet coats were coming back to them. Back and back! Lomondham tried to steer round. But the yellow horse held straight on and shot between the galloping pair, missing them by a hair's-breadth, scattering his clods in their faces. Victor heard the huntsman's outraged blasphemy die away down wind as Mustard-Pot took the next post-and-rails in his stride.

And now—now neither hill nor fence nor furrow checked them. For eight hundred yards the ground underhoof was flat as a racecourse. Across that flat ground, hounds and quarry had gone like a flame—gone over the brow of the rise—down into the heart of the Vale. And desperately—desperately, as though his red nostrils told him the way they had travelled—desperately as a prairie-fire leaps the crackling grasses—Mustard-Pot fled after. No foam flecked his useless bit. No sweat darkled on his striding muscles. He was still fresh—fresh and fearless and strong as the storm. But his rider was still afraid—afraid of the ground to come.

And suddenly, they were over the brow of the rise; suddenly, Victor saw the Vale below

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mud-splashed to the eyes, never knew."

—bad lands dropping terrace-like through patches of leafless coppice to a grey road and a brown, smoke-plumed village. Beyond these, broad as a river, gleamed the Saxenham Canal. "Steady, you fool! For God's sake, steady!" roared Mustard-Pot's rider, shoulders back, knees iron on the saddle-flaps, hands iron on the curb.

But Mustard-Pot heeded not a whit. Mustard-Pot saw only the hounds—the towling-rowling hounds that poured like a cascade of black-white-and-tan down the slope of the Vale.

Followed incredible seconds—seconds of slip and slide and scramble, of plunge and stumble and miraculous recovery—seconds when it seemed to the horseman as though no power on earth could keep him from pitching yards over that enormous down-stretched yellow neck—seconds when head, neck, and shoulders reared up like a giraffe's before his eyes as Mustard-Pot glissaded fifty sheer yards on his tail—seconds when the loose iron-stone of the hill-side rained like shrapnel from their hoof-strokes—seconds when the tree-roots tip-tilted them at every bound—seconds when it seemed as though they left solid earth and flew, flew for dear life down the whistling void.

Down Mustard-Pot went, and down, scrambling through ditches, scrambling over fences, scrambling among trees, scrambling his rider's heart in his mouth as a servant-girl scrambles eggs in a pan.

Yet, even so, hounds gained on horse. Hounds made the grey road and flashed left along the green grass at road-side five hundred yards clear ahead of the pair plunging like a scarlet-and-yellow plummet, downhill. Hounds saw their fox streak dark across the grey road and swing away from the brown village just as Mustard-Pot—sweating at long last—crashed through the young larch plantation at hill-foot and paused for the hundredth part of an instant, ears cocking to the far music.

Lomondham, his face white as his hunting-stock, sweat blinding his blue eyes, was too blown to take advantage of that momentary pausing; and before he could shorten rein Mustard-Pot had leaped out of the plantation —into the road—over the road—up the bank and through the hedge on to ridge-and-furrow again.

One minute later, Saxenham Village, turning out to a man, cheered one hatless horseman over the hedge of Farmer Thompson's paddock. Two minutes later, Saxenham Village, turning out to a boy, called, "Yes, sir. Yes, m'lady. That way, sir. That way, m'lady," to the scattered field who came, pounded and pounding, after

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him. Three minutes later, Saxenham Village, dashing, every mother's son and daughter of it, through the churchyard and up the slope behind, saw the dog-fox lolloping red across the chocolate loam that hid Farmer Thompson's winter wheat, and



"Mustard-Pot cracked on the last ounce of his astounding speed. Beyond— up the
himself as though

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howled to Naomi Braunston as she galloped by, "You keep to the left, missie. He's making for the canal."

Taking the far hedge of the paddock, Victor—a little of the breath back in his body and a few of his wits back in his mind—wondered how much longer the horse under him could keep on bolting. He even began to wonder whether the horse were bolting at all. Mustard-Pot, for all that he refused to answer the reins, seemed to know his business. Foam-flecked, he still went straight as a railway-train. Nothing stopped him—neither the stile they cleared to a rap of steel horse-shoes on sodden plank—nor the double-oxer with the ditch beyond—nor the five-foot cut-and-laid on to the new-sown corn. And "God help Thompson's wheat to-day," thought Lomondham, as they hared across it close behind the crazy hounds. Then he, too, heard voices: "You keep to the left, sir. He's making for the canal."

Before the meaning of those voices penetrated to the hatless horseman on the foam-flecked horse, Mustard-Pot was on turf again, barely a hundred yards behind the pack. But the pack, once off ploughland, had the heels of him. They ran nearly mute now, their sterns straight as ramrods, their hackles up, fury in their eyes, and fire in their blood. For their fox was in view. Their fox sank as he ran—ran gasping for the water they could smell when their blood-frantic eyes lost him.

Lomondham, mute as the pack, watched the beaten fox across the tow-path, saw him tumble over the canal-bank; watched hound after hound tumble-over after him; remembered the ten-foot drop to the twenty-foot water—and realized in one thrilling spout of superhuman exaltation that all fear had departed from him.

At last, at long last, the hot dashing courage of Mustard-Pot was into Mustard-Pot's rider. At last, at long last, Sir Victor Plowright Lomondham of Lomondham Hall rode straight again—rode straight and whooping for the kill. "Hallo! Hallo! Hallo! little bitches," he whooped—the reins loose on his horse's neck, the huntsman behind him and the canal before.

And at that whoop, impossibly, incredibly, Mustard-Pot cracked on the last ounce of his astounding speed. No need to touch him with crop or spur! The very ground rocked under his drumming hoofs. Bound on



bank—toiled the last eager hound. Then Victor was aware of Mustard-Pot gathering to clear the moon."

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gigantic bound, he hurtled at the hazard. The mud of the tow-path was fifty yards ahead—twenty—ten. Below it—still rippling to the passage of the pack—gleamed the brown and the desperate water. Beyond—up the bank—toiled the last eager hound. "Yooi, yooi, yooi to him, Winsome," whooped Lomondham.

Then he was aware of Mustard-Pot gathering himself as though to clear the moon, of the tow-path dropping away, of brown water scurrying under, of brown water leaping up, of a bombshell splash that flung white fountains high and high above his drowning eyes, and of a Force, a Force enormous and earthquake-like under his thighs, driving him up and up through the desperate waters. Then the fountains subsided; and Lomondham knew himself still in the saddle, knew his horse swimming like a sword-fish to be in at the death.

Dripping steed under dripping rider scrambled out of Saxenham Canal and up the far bank of it just in time to see what came in after years to be known as "Mustard-Pot's Fox" rolled over in the open.

VI.

Mustard-Pot's fox had been torn and eaten a good ten minutes, but belated riders on blown horses were still clattering across the canal-bridges, when Lomondham—reins over bridle-arm, the water oozing over the tops of his boots—glanced up at a girl on a grey mare and remarked, meaningly: "I'm going to toddle home, Naomi. It looks to me as though Silver Glory's had about enough. You'd better come, too."

He swung to saddle with a squelch, and the yellow horse—after one regretful glance at the blooded pack—stepped daintily away; Naomi Brannston on a perfectly fit Silver Glory following them as obediently as a cavewoman her mate.

Mustard-Pot, from whom I first had this tale one midsummer afternoon as he grazed leisurely among the fragrant grasses of Lomondham Park, assures me that his master's wife dropped her whip on the way home and that neither she nor Victor noticed it. But Silver Glory, who usually grazes with him, seems confident that Lomondham heard that whip fall from Naomi's hand just at the very moment she confessed, "Victor, you—you mustn't ride like that again. It frightens me."

Silver Glory, being a grey mare, did not approve.

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 103.

(The Third of the Series.)

IN number one time number two is eaten,
And as a vegetable can't be beaten.

1. She did great service in the war.
2. Once water, harder than the floor.
3. In Latin this is one, less one.
4. Gives shelter from the rain or sun.
5. You cannot do this, speaking truth.
6. Colour of cheeks in healthy youth.

KING COLE.

Answers to Acrostic No. 103 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on February 9th.*

To every light one alternative answer may be sent; it should be written at the side. At the foot of his answer every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 102.

THIS is the old-time season of Noël;
That brings you cheer from those who wish you well.

1. A calling this, high-sounding, but plebeian.
2. An epithet of darkness Tartarean.
3. Mere blue or grey, or colour red as roses.
4. Cut out—a custom that our state imposes.
5. The verdant green, making the Wild West smile.
6. Write down in Latin and curtail meanwhile.
7. A realm that, in its centre, owns the king.
8. No end to this, unless it be a sting.

EDI.

1.	Y	ellin	G
2.	U	tte	R
3.	L	ak	E
4.	E	xcis	E
5.	T	enderfoo	T
6.	I	nter	I
7.	D	ominio	N
8.	E	verlastin	G

NOTES.—Light 3. Mere, a lake; crimson lake. 6. Interim. 7. Central syllable, in.

EIGHTEENTH SERIES: RESULT.

As many as eighteen solvers answered the four acrostics quite correctly; they will divide the prizes, each one receiving fourteen shillings. They are: Anvil, Mr. C. Dance, 45, Cowick Road, Tooting, S.W.; Arden, Mr. R. W. Bates, Royal Naval College, Dartmouth; Beehive, Mrs. Eaton, 98, Ebury Street, S.W.; Beggar, Mr. B. G. Pearce, 5, Ethelbert Road, Bromley, Kent; Corisande, Mrs. Bridges, 7, Alexandra Road, Clifton, Bristol; Diggy, Rev. M. Elrington-Bisset, 8, Chantrey House, Eccleston Street, S.W.; Junius, Mr. F. C. W. Grigson, Amesbury, Hindhead; Landor, Mr. H. W. Arnold, 7, Forester Road, Bath; Lilcat, Miss L. Eaton, 597, Kingston Road, Raynes Park, S.W.20; Lobo, Mrs. L. Morris, 74, Larch Road, Cricklewood, N.W.2; Noluc, Mrs. R. M. Milne, Eggardun, Dartmouth, S. Devon; Phanta, Mrs. Ludlow Handcock, 85, Chester Square, S.W.; Rumball, Sir Alfred Croft, Rumleigh, Bere Alston, Devon; Sant, Mr. W. H. Harsant, Tower House, Clifton Down Road, Clifton, Bristol; Splosh, Mr. L. Dale, Christ's Hospital, Sussex; Wals, Mr. W. Stradling, 12, Bardswell Road, Oxford; Yoko, Mr. F. Rawson, 10, Richmond Mansions, Earl's Court, S.W.5; Zyme, Mr. J. W. Pulsford, 57, Deauville Road, Clapham, S.W.4.

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VARIATIONS
on a personal theme
by
LANDON RONALD

Illustrated by Bert Thomas.

VARIATION III.

The First Time I Conducted.

IT was a curious concatenation of circumstances which led up to my becoming a conductor, though the wish was always there and I was only awaiting the opportunity. It arrived sooner than I expected—and found me unprepared. It all came about through that silly little curtain-raiser called "Did You Ring?" for which I had composed the music. The libretto was by a Mr. J. W. Mabson, whom I had met at Sheffield, and he got John Houghton (the editor of a paper called *Fun*, long since defunct but very well known at the time) to write the lyrics. Charles Lauri, having made money over running "L'Enfant Prodigue," thought it would be a good idea to mount another play without words.

I wonder how many of my readers remember Charles Lauri in the heyday of his popularity. He was the famous portrayer of the Cat in the Drury Lane pantomime "Dick Whittington," and perhaps no man ever impersonated so many different animals on the stage with the same consistent success. He was a curious-looking little fellow off the stage. Short, clean-shaven, thin, very plain, and amazingly agile. One day, when I was seeing him into a hansom cab, he took my breath away by climbing on to the wheel, getting on the roof, and jumping from the top into his seat inside. The whole thing took a few seconds, and I saw the cabman rubbing his eyes, wondering if he had lost his senses. He loved playing this sort of joke, but there was a serious side to his nature, and he was a pretty good business man, with a natural instinct for artistic things. His choice of "L'Enfant Prodigue" proved this, and his second production, to which I am now coming, was quite a delight, although it was a failure with the public. It was, like its



"He took my breath away by jumping from the top into his seat inside."

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predecessor, a play without words, entitled "La Statue du Commandeur," but it lacked the simplicity, the charm, the pathos of "L'Enfant Prodigue," and the music was in nowise as good. It was superbly acted, the chief part being taken by M. Tarride, who, since those days, made a big reputation for himself in Paris. The piece was too short to fill an entire evening's bill, and, in any case, curtain-raisers were all the fashion and were looked upon as a necessity. I had the very thing ready and waiting, so trotted off with it one Sunday afternoon to Charles Lauri's house in Camden Town, played him the music, read him the libretto, and he accepted it there and then for production at the Prince of Wales Theatre. It was put into rehearsal immediately, with two well-known artistes of that period, Templar Saxe and Katie James, both of whom performed it admirably. I have some sort of idea that the theatre conductor asked me to conduct the first band rehearsal of my little piece, and that I tried to do so and completely failed. But I am in no way certain of this, so I would prefer not to count this as the actual first time I had a baton in my hand.

"Did You Ring?" was received very well by the Press. It was on this occasion that *Punch* thought fit to make the joke on my name which has been used since in a hundred different ways. "This *lever-du-rideau*," said *Punch*, "is a bright and well-written sketch which should prove attractive. The authors, Messrs. Mabson and Houghton, were fortunate to *Land on Ronald* to compose the music." After a run of about three weeks, Charles Lauri thought he had dropped enough money over the two pieces, so he informed M. Tarride that he intended closing down. But that didn't fit in with Tarride's plans at all. He couldn't afford to return to Paris as a declared failure in London. Something had to be done. He was a man of considerable means, and made an offer to Charles Lauri to buy him out lock, stock, and barrel, and run the theatre himself. The terms were duly arranged, and Charles Lauri vanished from the scene. I had by this time become on very friendly terms with Tarride, whom I admired both as artiste and man, and at his special request I would often go down to the theatre and spend an hour with him in his dressing-room. I sauntered in on the first Saturday *matinée* given under his own management, and found everybody in a state of excitement. Not getting anything very coherent from the French members of the company, I sought out the conductor, who was English, and he explained to me what had occurred. Tarride, being entirely ignorant of the way we ran a theatre in this country, had failed to provide the necessary cheque to pay the orchestra. It being Saturday, the doors of the *Crédit Lyonnais* were closed, and it was impossible to obtain the money. The members of the orchestra swallowed the tale with a lot of water, as they had been caught by foreigners before. Eventually, however, they were persuaded to play at the *matinée* on the condition that they should receive their salaries before the evening performance began.

AS far as I can remember, the sum required was something between one hundred and fifty and two hundred pounds. Unfortunately, there wasn't twenty pounds in the house at the *matinée*. I took a cab to Charles Lauri's house to explain the position to him, only to find that he was somewhere in France. Tarride knew literally no one in London, and as the time approached for the evening performance the outlook could not have been worse. The meagre audience began to wander in, and by eight-fifteen the few dozen people present began to get impatient, hissing and clapping and showing other signs of resentment at the delay. The members of the orchestra stuck to their guns and steadfastly refused to go in. Eventually Templar Saxe went in front of the curtain and announced that owing to the sudden indisposition of M. Tarride the performance that night could not take place, but that all moneys would be returned on application at the box-office. A few boos and a few jeers, and the audience filed out. I always have thought it fortunate that someone had had the presence of mind to lock Tarride in his dressing-room, as he was a very powerful man, and was in such a state of violent anger at the behaviour of the orchestra that had he got anywhere near any one of them there would undoubtedly have been great damage done!

I bearded the lion in his den and calmed him down and got him to talk rationally. I went with him to his hotel and we sat talking and planning until midnight. He had made up his mind to reopen the theatre on the Monday night, to pay off the present orchestra and conductor on the Monday morning, and not allow one of them in the theatre again. He insisted that I should in the meantime obtain another orchestra for him, rehearse it Monday afternoon, and conduct it in the evening. Although I had not the remotest idea where a single orchestral player was to be found, and although I was absolutely ignorant how to beat time correctly, I cheerfully and willingly undertook the job, and thought it all the fun in the world. Such is the confidence of youth! I announced most casually to members of my family, just as if it were an everyday occurrence, that I had been appointed "the conductor of the Prince of Wales." I was

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"Hundreds of 'unemployed' in the orchestral profession turned up on chance of obtaining an engagement."

asked by my brother whether I was referring to the public-house in Harrow Road, the theatre in Coventry Street, or the son of Her Majesty the Queen. Some people always will be funny at the wrong moment! The thing that worried me was the fact that it was Sunday, which meant my waiting twenty-four hours before I could get busy. I had duly settled in my own mind my plan of campaign, and sure enough on the Monday morning I was walking up and down Bond Street waiting for Keith Prowse, Ashton, and Hayes to open their respective doors. I had seen various advertisements of these firms announcing that they could supply bands for dances and parties, so why shouldn't they be able to supply me with one for a theatre? At all events, this is what I had hoped and believed might be arranged! Disillusion, alas! was quickly to follow. I shall never forget the expression on the face of the first man to whom I confided in a very meek voice that all I required was an orchestra of forty musicians to be at the Prince of Wales Theatre by three o'clock that afternoon. He looked me up and down, twirled his horrid waxed moustache, and said in an airy, sarcastic tone, "And are we to deliver the goods packed in cases or will you send the Royal carriages to fetch 'em?" I pleaded with him seriously, only to elicit the amazing retort, "'Ere, young fellow, 'op it, and don't act the giddy goat." I had never heard the expression before, but during the morning I heard many other expressions which were new to me, but scarcely fit for publication.

After obtaining two or three indefinite promises that I should be supplied with some sort of band, I wended my way to the theatre after lunch, to find the stage door entrance crowded with orchestral men holding instruments of every description under their arms or in their hands. It appeared that the whole story had spread like wild-fire throughout the orchestral profession, with the result that hundreds of "unemployed" turned up on chance of obtaining an engagement. Entirely ignoring the fact that I had ordered at least three Bond Street orchestras, I promptly engaged forty men, who gave me the most wonderful testimonials of their respective abilities, and within half an hour had taken my place at the conductor's desk and was endeavouring to rehearse them. I doubt whether such weird and uncanny sounds have ever been heard in a theatre before or since. Most of the men turned out to be "duds," who could neither read nor play, and I, of course, could not conduct. I was just asking a cornet player if he would be so kind as to play in the same key as the rest of the orchestra, when a message came from the box-office that *three* orchestras were on their way to the theatre. This was unthinkable, but sure enough they came. The Fates were very kind to me, as they all proved to be Hungarians who could only play czardas or a rhapsody. After being extremely courteous to them and getting them out of the theatre, I continued

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rehearsing till half an hour before the doors opened, and conducted from that night till the end of the run of the piece. It was the first time I had ever held a baton, and I caught the fever. Awful as the orchestra was, awful as my conducting was, I loved it all. Visions of conducting great concerts and great orchestras floated through my brain, though it was many years before those visions were to be realized.

And thus it was that I became a conductor.

VARIATION IV.

Accompanying at Windsor and Balmoral.

IT was in the year 1887 that I first had the honour of appearing before Queen Victoria—if playing second fiddle in a students' orchestra can be called "appearing before Queen Victoria." I was just fourteen years of age, but looked somewhat younger. I was a student at the Royal College of Music, where I was studying pianoforte as my principal subject under Franklin Taylor; violin under Henry Holmes, and afterwards under Mr. Gompertz; composition under Sir (then Dr.) Hubert Parry; and counterpoint under Sir (then Dr.) Frederick Bridge. I had incidentally to attend lectures and play second violin in the orchestra under Sir (then Dr.) Charles Villiers Stanford. The students' orchestra was commanded to appear at Windsor at the great banquet which was given either on the night of the Jubilee or the following night. (I know for certain it was either one or the other, but I couldn t positively assert which.) I remember quite distinctly my great indignation at my dear mother, because she would insist on my wearing a velvet knickerbocker suit which, for some ungodly reason, I possessed at the time. We were all to leave from Paddington Station in a couple of third-class coaches attached to a special train. This special train turned out to be the one which was to take the various Royalties to Windsor Castle. I can still feel the thrills I experienced when I arrived on the platform carrying my violin and was told by some fellow-student, "You see that couple there? Well, that's the King and Queen of Norway! Just standing by them are the King and Queen of Denmark. And you see these three men grouped together? Well, the old man is the Kaiser, and the man with the beard is the German Crown Prince (afterwards Kaiser Frederick), and the youngster is Prince Wilhelm." I remember I was quite enthralled and felt very much the same as when I was first taken to Madame Tussaud's.

Only two outstanding memories remain of what occurred at the Castle that night. The first is that some kind official hoisted me on his shoulder and let me have a peep at the great banqueting-hall through a tiny little window, and told me to be sure and have a look at the gold plate, which duly impressed me. The second is my intense nervousness and anxiety lest I should play a wrong note, as I was obsessed with the idea that Queen Victoria would at once detect it, and that I should be promptly sent to prison.

My next appearance before Queen Victoria was a very different affair, but oddly enough it took place on the evening of her Diamond Jubilee (or, once again, it might have been the night after). Signor Tosti (as he was then) occupied the unofficial position of Court accompanist. Tosti was an extremely popular song-writer of that epoch, and will always be remembered in this country by his setting of Whyte-Melville's lyric, "Good-bye," which Melba helped to make a household word. He was a great favourite at Court. The whole of the Royal Family were attached to him, and Society followed suit. He and I were friends for years. I knew him to be a delightful humbug and a *poseur* of the first order; but he had a charm and fascination all his own, and possessed many qualities that endeared him to his friends. He could accompany his own songs admirably, but otherwise his powers in this direction were decidedly limited. And he was clever enough to realize his limitations.

Thus it came about that when Queen Victoria commanded Mme. Albani and M. Plançon (the greatest French bass of modern times) to appear before her on the night of her Diamond Jubilee, and also commanded Tosti to accompany them, he suddenly developed rheumatism in the hands, and asked permission to bring me to play all the items excepting his own songs. He further promised to turn the pages for me! Naturally, I was mightily pleased to get the opportunity, and sincerely grateful to him for giving it to me. I can see the whole scene as clearly as if it were yesterday. We arrived at Windsor, and a Royal carriage was sent for Plançon and myself to take us to and from the Castle Hotel. Tosti and Mme. Albani were staying at the Castle itself. When we arrived there we were first ushered into a small room, and were then led to a large *salon*, where we found members of the Court standing about, with Tosti and Mme. Albani keeping near to the grand pianoforte. There was a sofa for the Queen near the piano, and a small table just by with a programme on it and a powerful pair of binocular glasses. I can say without fear of contradiction that we were all fearfully nervous. Nobody spoke much above a whisper, and the whole atmosphere of the room was horribly depressing and unnerving.

Ten long minutes elapsed before the

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Queen entered, and then everyone seemed to me to be petrified. She advanced very slowly, walking with a stick in her right hand and leaning heavily on the arm of a stalwart Indian attendant, who seemed mightily proud of his job. She looked very much like the pictures and portraits I had seen of her, but was much stouter than I had imagined, and her expression was so very stern that I got the impression (a wrong one) that something had occurred which had greatly annoyed her. I must conscientiously admit that I was frightened to death of her, although I had reached man's estate! I probably never accompanied quite so badly in my life as I did the first song or two, and it was only after I found her bowing very graciously to Plançon and smiling quite sweetly to Mme. Albani that I began to feel at all at my ease. The little concert only lasted about three-quarters of an hour, and at the end of it Mme. Albani, Plançon, and Tosti were all presented to Her Majesty, who appeared to be most gracious and affable, more particularly to Mme. Albani. Some kind Equerry-in-Waiting noticed me standing by the piano alone, came up, and in the most charming manner congratulated me on my accompaniments, and added: "I'll have you presented in a minute." When the Queen had finished talking to Mme. Albani, I saw him approach her and say something in a low voice. She took up the big pair of glasses on the table and looked at me through them (although I was only a few feet away) and nodded her head. The Equerry promptly came and, lightly holding my arm, duly presented me. I bowed low, and wished that the earth would open. Tosti told me afterwards that I went as white as the proverbial sheet. My hopeless embarrassment was added to by the fact that for some unconscionable reason the Queen kept the opera-glasses to her eyes and stared at me through them! I suppose she did this for about ten seconds, but it seemed to me ten years. It was just bad luck, because it was certainly not a habit of hers, as she had never been known to do it before. She thanked me for what I had done, and my reply was a low bow. A pause ensued, and I didn't know whether to retire or stay where I was. Another ten years passed, and she remarked, "Accompanying is a very great gift," which elicited another bow from me. Still another pause, and then I was unmistakably dismissed from the Royal presence by a very sweet smile. I had the good fortune to walk backwards without upsetting anything or anybody, and soon recovered my spirits under the influence of a delightful little supper-party, with Lord Farquhar as our host.

The next day I received an enamel and diamond pin as a souvenir of the event. The Victorian jewellery could not be compared with that given by King Edward and Queen Alexandra, or the present King and Queen. Some of these designs are quite beautiful, but the pins and studs I had from Queen Victoria were all ponderous and big, and could only be worn on very special occasions. Still, I was very proud of this particular pin, and am quite sure I should have adorned myself with it every day but for the fact that it took the form of a very big



"I bowed low, and wished that the earth would open."

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monogram V.R., and as my initials are L.R. I was afraid of my friends thinking I had suddenly taken to wearing my own initials as a scarf-pin.

This appearance at Windsor Castle as accompanist was the forerunner of many others, which call for no special mention; but one experience in connection with a command to appear at Balmoral is worth recounting. Others have given their impressions of Balmoral so infinitely better than I could ever hope to do that it is not my intention to describe what actually occurred there, but just to narrate an unforgettable incident on the way home. A certain well-known American baritone, who was very popular in this country twenty-five years ago, had been commanded to sing to the Queen on this particular occasion, and as usual I had to accompany. He was fearfully pleased with himself; indeed, the whole affair went to his head, and on the return journey he bored me unutterably by talking of nothing else but of his "wonderful success," and how "Queen Victoria had never been known to be so amiable to any other big singer or artiste," etc., etc., etc.! The luncheon-hour arrived and we went into the dining-car, which was packed with people. Everything went smoothly till my friend was unable to get any potatoes with his meat. Once he asked, twice he asked, without any result. Imagine my horror when he got up and said, in a very loud voice, "Waiter, are you aware that I have just been singing to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, and that you have kept me waiting nearly ten minutes for a potato?"



A CARICATURE.
By Bert Thomas.

It is well known that Queen Victoria, besides being very fond of music, was quite a good pianist herself. I was told an incident by one of the Equerries, at one of the many supper parties we had after a Royal concert, which I think worth relating. Queen Victoria had been told that one of her Ladies-in-Waiting possessed an extremely good voice and sang very well. She was asked by the Queen one evening to sing, and with fear and trembling she at once consented to do so, choosing a famous operatic aria which ended with a long shake. The Queen expressed her surprise that the performer never attempted to end the aria as it was written. Her Majesty turned smilingly to the performer's sister, who was sitting near her, and said, "Doesn't your sister shake, Lady X.?" to which the lady promptly replied, "Oh, yes, ma'am; she is shaking all over"!

(To be concluded.)

(These selections from ***Sir*** *Landon Ronald's Reminiscences are published by arrangement with Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton, who are shortly issuing "Variations on a Personal Theme" in volume form.)*

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"DEAR DUCKS"

by

LYNN DOYLE

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK GILLETT R.I.

WEE MR. ANTHONY, the solicitor, said Mr. Patrick Murphy, was one of them men that hasn't room in their heads for more than one idea at a time. Him bein' a solicitor, ye might think it was law his head was full of, but not a bit of it. Outside of his own office, or the Petty Sessions Court, law never troubled him; he just passed his final examination an' then placed the whole business in the hands of the divil. Sport was his weakness. In the summer he played tennis as if he made his livin' by it; an' it was well for him he didn't, for with him bein' so short-sighted he stopped a deal more balls with the pit of his stomach than ever he did with his bat. But with the end of the good weather he dhropped the tennis like a hot potato an' took to the shootin'. An' then the coroner sharpened his pencil; for when Mr. Anthony turned out a charge of shot on the world only an all-seein' Providence could tell where some of the pickles would come to a full-stop.

I was standin' whettin' my scythe one October evenin' when Mr. Anthony comes into the yard.

"Pat," sez he, "is there any wild duck about that a body could shoot handy?"

"Lashin's of them," sez I. "Do you want a brace or two?"

"I do," sez he. "The fact is, Pat," he goes on, "Miss Livingston an' I is a bit friendly lately——"

"Oh, well," sez I, "what odds? If it comes to a breach of promise ye can conduct your own defence."

"I haven't got the length of a promise yet," sez he, "let alone a breach of it."

"What's holdin' ye?" sez I, "that can talk round a whole bench of magistrates, let alone an innocent slip of a girl that might be your daughter."

"You're a liar," sez Mr. Anthony. "I'm not even ten years older than her. It's the shootin' is holdin' me back," sez he. "She's clean death on my takin' up a gun; an' I'd as soon live single all my life as give it up now that I have masthered it."

"Masthered it, God forgive ye!" sez I to myself—an' then out loud: "There's no doubt you've come on extraordinary well at it this last winter or two."

"Haven't I, Pat?" sez he, all pleased, "haven't I now? D'ye mind that grouse I shot, last June was a year?"

"Wheesht, Mr. Anthony!" sez I.

"I don't care a fig," sez he. "Close season or no close season, didn't the bird rise up fornent me an' just ask for it! I never made a prettier shot in my life. Hang it; why wasn't it in the month of August, when I could ha' told people! But that's neither here nor there," sez he. "It's in my mind to shoot a couple of nice ducks an' send them round to Miss Livingston. If she had the wing and a bit of the breast of one of them sittin' before her on a plate she might think betther of my shootin'."

"Does she not think well of it as it is?" sez I.

"Well," sez Mr. Anthony, lookin' a wee bit foolish, "there was an accident happened me one day lately when I was walkin' across the fields with her. A rabbit got up in front of us, an' I fired a bit hasty an' missed it."

"Is that all?" sez I. "She surely wouldn't expect even you to hit everything you fire at."

"It wasn't that," sez Mr. Anthony, rubbin' his chin. "The fact is, Pat," sez he, "I hit her dog. It was that blasted wee Pomeranian that goes along with its tail arched over its back, as if it was as proud of its hind end as it is of its face; an', of course, in the tail it got it. Curse the misbegotten little brute; if it carried its tail decently out behind it like an ordinary dog the divil a pickle it would ha' got, an' I might even have killed the rabbit. However, that's past prayin' for now. Where do you think I could get a pair of ducks?"

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"Try the marshy ground where the Ballygullion river flows into the lake," sez I. "It's clean alive with ducks, an' most of them flappers, an' flyin' very slow."

"Flyin' slow," sez Mr. Anthony, a bit vexed. "Flyin' slow, is it? What do I care whether they're flyin' slow or fast? You'd think I was a novice to hear you talkin'." An' off he goes in a huff.

BUT about three days afther, back he comes again, an' not near as cocky this time.

"Did she like the ducks?" sez I.

"I always thought this tennis playin' was bad for a man's shootin'," sez Mr. Anthony. "Would you believe it, Pat, but I've been down at the marshes these three evenin's, an' fired away as many cartridges as would fill a counsellor's wig, an' the divil a feather I've brought down."

"Did ye not as much as wound somethin'?" sez I, chaffin' him.

"Well," sez he, "there *was* one, a drake, I think, that flew away very slow an' heavy afther I fired at him."

"I wouldn't think much of that," sez I, "He might have a touch of rheumatism, sleepin' in the damp. You'll have to take another evenin' or two at them."

"It's no good," sez he, "till I get this infernal tennis out of my system. Besides, I haven't time. There's a dinner party at the Livingstons' on Friday, an' I wanted the ducks for that."

"Ye needn't bother your head," sez I. "My wife has a pair of young ones fattened for them."

"Has she?" sez he, lookin' disappointed; "that's a pity. Pat," sez he, all excited, "would she sell them to me? Hold your tongue now; let her send word to the Livingstons that the rats ate them; an' then I'll come along with a pair just in the nick of time. Don't talk to me," sez he, hoppin' round as the notion took hold of him; "there's not a bein' about the place would know a wild-duck from a wather-hen barrin' Mr. Livingston himself, an' sure they'll be plucked clean naked before they get his length."

"Ye've no sense, Mr. Anthony," sez I. "Wouldn't the very scullery-maid know when a bird has its throat cut instead of bein' shot?"

"So she would," sez Mr. Anthony. "That's awkward. Wait now," sez he. "I'm not beat yet. Dhrive them through the gap in the hedge there, one at a time, an' I'll shoot them as they come through. What about that, eh? It's hard to get the betther of me, mind ye, when I lay my brains to a thing. Go on now an' get them. What are ye waitin' for?"

"It's clean murdher, Mr. Anthony," sez I, "forbye that ye might miss them."

"Miss them!" sez he, "Miss them, ye imperent ould vagabond! An' them walkin'! Didn't ye see me bringin' down a woodcock in the Drumnaquirk wood only last February?"

"I did," sez I; "but you were aimin' at a wood-pigeon at the time. However, I suppose I'll have to be as big a fool as yourself. Away an' post yourself, an' I'll bring the ducks. What size of shot are ye usin'?"

"Number three," sez he.

"It's too big," sez I. "Ye'll damage them."

"It's all I have," sez he. "I've killed ducks with it before."

"Ye have," sez I, "an' ye killed a terrier dog of mine with it too. If Mr. Livingston breaks one of them gold teeth of his on a pickle of number three shot I wouldn't give much for your chance of marryin' his daughter. But have your own way. Ye'll have it anyway, I know."

So off I goes and brings the two ducks, an' them quackin' away as if they'd ten years to live. Ye'd ha' thought somebody had told them what sort of a shot Mr. Anthony was. When I came back he was on the far side of the gap with the gun in his hand.

"Are ye ready now?" sez I. "Here's the first of them."

"Hold on a minit," sez he, an' I could tell by his voice he was flusthered. "I want a good steady shot. I'm goin' to lie down on my belly."

"If one of them two-year-old bullocks of mine steps on ye ye'll get up again," sez I.

"Bless my soul!" sez I to myself, as a thought struck me; an' I ran over to the gap an' peeped through. It was well I looked at Mr. Anthony first. If I hadn't ha' shouted I was a dead man.

"Good heavens, Pat," sez he, lowerin' the gun, "I thought it was one of the ducks."

"Ye didn't think a duck had a pair of nailed boots on it, did ye?" sez I. "Ye'll do ten years for manslaughter yet. I wanted to make sure the bullocks was out of your line of fire."

"Will ye dhrive out them dratted ducks an' have done with it?" sez Mr. Anthony in a rage. "Ye have my nerve near ruined as it is."

"Come on, then," sez I. "Blaze away!"

I whished the first of them through the gap—keepin' well to the rear myself, I may tell ye. There came a terrible roar of a report. When I run through the gap there was as much smoke dhriftin' down the field as if the kitchen chimney was on fire, an' Mr. Anthony rowlin' over an' over in the middle of it, an' cursin' most lamentable.

"In the name of goodness, Mr. Anthony,"

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"There was as much smoke as if the kitchen chimney was on fire, an' Mr. Anthony rowlin' over an' over in the middle of it."

sez I, "what's wrong? Did ye shoot out of the wrong end of the gun?" For troth he was capable of it.

"It was you, ye ould fool ye," sez he, risin' to his feet an' rubbin' himself. "Ye had me scared into thinkin' I might miss the beast, an' I pulled the two triggers at the one time. My back-bone is out of joint," sez he, reachin' round between his shouldher-blades. "But I'll go bail I killed the duck, anyway."

"Where is it, then, if ye did?" sez I, lookin' all round. For there was no duck to be seen.

"It's the most extraordinary thing," sez Mr. Anthony, stickin' the eye-glass in his eye an' lookin' all round him. "I'll swear an' kiss the book that I hit it."

"I'll tell ye what ye've done," sez I. "Ye've blew it to pieces." An' that's what he had done. We searched up an' we searched down, but divil a all we ever

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discovered of the same duck but the neb an' one of the feet.

"Aw, well," sez I, at the last, "it had a lovely death, even if there isn't much eatin' about the carcass. Will I dhrive out the other one for ye now?"

"Dhrive it to blazes if ye like," sez Mr. Anthony, fair boilin' over. "Have ye any whisky about the place? Then come an' rub my shoulder with some of it. An' ye may throw that blasted gun in the well," sez he, an' stalks off into the house.

But by the time his shoulder was well rubbed with the whisky an' him had a good jorum of it in his inside, he began to come round.

"Say what ye like, Pat," sez he, "it was a great shot. Plump in the middle I must ha' got that duck."

"Ye must have," sez I, sootherin' him. "It was only outlying bits like the neb that we found. There's no doubt ye have a very straight eye."

"Haven't I, Pat?" sez he, swellin' himself out. "Haven't I now? Curse that tennis," sez he; "if I had let it alone an' practised with the gun all summer I could shoot midges by now. Look here, Pat," sez he, "I'll send Miss Livingston that brace of wild duck yet. They'll be late for the dinner party, but what matter?"

"They needn't be," sez I. "Couldn't ye come out to-morrow evenin' to the marshes?"

"I can't," sez he. "The Quarter Sessions is on. It's a pity, too, an' me shootin' the way I am. But I'm prosecutin' in some poachin' cases an' I must turn up. Look here, Pat," sez he, "the ducks'll be plentier in a week or two, won't they?"

"With the first touch of frost," sez I, "there'll be dhroves of them."

"Very well," sez he; "the next likely evenin' that ye see any plenty of ducks in the marshes send for me an' I'll come should it be rainin' conveyances an' snowin' wills. I've got the true knack of shootin' this time. Give me the neb of that duck till I show it to my articled clerk. Ye'll not forget, now, to send me word."

SO I promised I would not; an' clean forgot all about it till a fortnight aftherwards, when I was out myself lookin' for ducks with the old muzzle-loader, an' Big Billy Lenahan of the Hills with me. It was a fine frosty evenin', with just enough ice about to fetch the ducks to the open water, an' I knowed there'd be strings of them comin' down the river presently.

"Billy," sez I, "this is just the very night for Mr. Anthony. I must send him word."

An' then I remembered I was makin' a mistake.

"Let him stay at home, the wee gas-bag," sez Billy, with a growl. "Five pound his long tongue cost me at the Quarter Sessions, bad luck to him."

"If ye let yourself be caught poachin', Billy," sez I, "ye needn't blame Mr. Anthony. He's prosecutin' solicitor, an' he has his duty to do."

"I know he has," sez Billy, "but he needn't have done it that wicked. He promised me he wouldn't press the case; an' then he goes an' gets himself all blew up with his own talk; an' I'm fined five pound through him, the vain wee cockatoo. But take your time," sez Billy. "I'll be even with him yet."

"Ach, don't bear malice, Billy," sez I. "There's no harm in Mr. Anthony."

"There's a deal too much of the blether about him in a law-court," sez Billy, still very sore. "He's all gab and guts, like a young crow. But let him come. We'll have some fun out of him, anyway."

So we sent one of the young Robinsons for Mr. Anthony, an' Billy and I went on afther the ducks. In about half an hour's time he come up behind us, an' him an almighty swell with a fur-lined coat an' his evening-dhress below it.

"You're never goin' to shoot ducks in that rig, Mr. Anthony?" sez I.

"I am not," sez he, "worse luck. I'm going out to dine at Miss Armytage's of the Hall. Have ye shot many?"

"Half-a-dozen up till now," sez I; "but they'll be coming along thicker presently."

"Well, bad cess to it," sez Mr. Anthony, very savage. "An' just the evenin' I can't get at them. You'd think they knew they were safe."

"Away home an' change your clothes," sez I, "an' send Miss Armytage word you're not well."

"I can't," sez he, bitin' at his nails; "no, hang it, I can't. Miss Livingston is to be there. Between you an' me, Pat," sez he, "I've given her a hint that I'm goin' to ask her a question to-night. But do you an' Billy go on, an' I'll walk with you. I've been readin' up about duck-shootin' since I saw you, and I might be able to give you a wrinkle or two."

"Come on, then," sez I, for I seen some very offensive expressions thremblin' on Billy Lenahan's tongue.

A couple of minutes later along comes a pair of ducks just barely within range, an' I fetched the near one down.

"If ye'd waited till the two of them was in line," sez Mr. Anthony, "the one shot would have killed both."

"If he could fly afther them, he could catch them with his hands," sez Billy, very sour. "It's a pity it's not you is carryin' the gun."

"I wish I was," sez Mr. Anthony. "Bad

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cess to it, I wish I was. I could shoot to-night, I know I could. An' look at the strings of ducks comin' along there, far out. Where's that old pair of wadin' boots I gave you, Pat? If you were only out in the middle there you could shoot rings round you. Pat," sez he, dancin' round with excitement, "away home for them, quick. Damme, I'll put them on an' have a shot myself. Run; an' don't waste a minit. I must turn up at the dinner. My whole future life might depend on it. But I'd like to have a couple of shots before I commit myself to matrimony. There's no tellin' what effect marriage might have on my shootin'. Away with you now, quick."

"Ye'd betther wait till you've come back from the dinner, Mr. Anthony," sez I. "The moon'll be up by then."

"There'll be two moons up by then," sez Mr. Anthony. "Did you ever taste Miss Armytage's port wine?—Go on an' get the boots. Gimme your gun an' the powder an' shot. I'll be loadin' the empty barrel while you're away."

"Betther let Billy load it," sez I. "You have no great experience with a muzzle-loader."

"Blethers," sez Mr. Anthony, layin' hold of the gun. "You'd think I was a beginner to hear you talkin'. I blew the nail off my thumb with a muzzle-loader before Billy was born."

"Keep an eye on him while he's chargin' her," sez I to Billy in an undertone; "only if you're wise it'll be from behind a tree. I'll be back before he has time to shoot much



"In the name of goodness, what kept ye all this time? The toes is near froze off me."

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more than the dog." An' off I went, hot-foot; for I knowed there would be fun before the evenin' was over.

WHEN I got back he was sittin' on a stone in his stocking feet, waitin'.

"In the name of goodness, what kept ye all this time?" sez he. "The toes is near froze off me. An' there's not less than five hundhred ducks gone past us far out. Here, pull the boots on me, the pair of you, an' I'll lean on the gun."

"If ye fill the muzzle of that gun wi' dirt, Mr. Anthony," sez I, "all ye'll kill this evenin' 'll be a solicitor; for the charge'll come through the near end of her."

"Hang it," sez he in a splutther, "am I doin' that? Wait a minit, an' I'll lean on the butt."

"Well, if you think I'm goin' to pull on your boots with the muzzle of a loaded gun proddin' me in the small of the back," sez Billy, "you're mistaken. I'll hold him, Pat, an' do you pull. There you are. Away ye go now; straight in front of you."

"Where are ye sendin' the man, Billy?" sez I. "Come back, Mr. Anthony. You're headin' right for the main dhrain, an' if ye go in there it's a submarine ye'll need instead of wadin' boots. Keep to your left. Easy now; don't fire! That's only a coot scutterin' along the top of the wather. Wade as far out as the boots'll let ye. The ducks is frightened of us on the bank here."

"Bad manners to you, anyway, with your main dhrain," sez he. "My nerves is all janglin'! How will I know the main dhrain, if I come on it?"

"You'll know by goin' in over your ears," sez I. "But you're not headin' that way now."

So off he moves through the wather an' mud, goin' very cautious.

"Why didn't ye let him go on the way he was goin'," sez Billy. There'll be no sport with him now."

"I never seen him go out with a gun yet that there wasn't sport," sez I. "He'll shoot somethin' he oughtn't to before he goes home; take care it isn't yourself, ye black-hearted ruffian. Wait; here, he's comin' back. What has he done now? Listen to the language of him. What's wrong, Mr. Anthony?"

"It's them cursed coots," sez he. "The wather was just lippin' up to the top of the boots when a couple of them came splat-therin' by, makin' a wake like a steamer; an' there's about two gallon of mud gone down the legs of my evenin' breeches. An' the moths has ate the seat out of the only spare pair I have. Curse it, anyway," sez he. "I may stay at home now."

"Such nonsense," sez I. "Won't your feet be undher the table? If it was your shirt front was round your legs you might be talkin'. Hurry up an' try a shot. The light's goin'."

"I might as well let it alone," sez he. "I'm goin' to have no luck to-night. But I'll have a try, seein' I'm here." An' off he wades again.

"It's the first time I ever went out with him," sez I to Billy, "that he wasn't cock-sure he'd fill his game-bag with one shot. It's a good sign. He'll hit somethin' to-night, see if he doesn't. Do ye think he loaded that second barrel all right?"

"He did," sez Billy. "I kept a careful eye on him. Just a fair charge he put in, an' no more."

"Watch him, then, Billy," sez I, "till we see how he does. Juke down! There's a sthring of ducks comin' between us an' him. He doesn't see them, the wee donkey. Shout to him, Billy."

"No, don't shout," sez Billy. "There's some beyond him as well. Is he never goin' to shoot," sez he, fidgin'. I could see Billy was near as excited as myself. "He sees them," chuckles he. "Look out for fun now."

Up goes Mr. Anthony's gun to his shoulder. He followed the ducks with the muzzle till I was near bursted holdin' my breath. I could see him bracin' himself up as he pulled the trigger.

"Now for a shower of ducks, Billy," sez I,

There came nothing but the crack of a cap.

"Bad luck to it," sez I; "a miss-fire. I knowed he wouldn't load her right. Behind you, Mr. Anthony!" I shouts, leppin' up. "Behind ye!"

He wheeled half round at the sound of my voice, seen the second lot of ducks, up with the gun again, an' fires. There was a report like the blastin' of a quarry. Mr. Anthony staggered back, recovered himself a bit, clawin' in the air, an' then souse down he went on the broad of his back, an' disappeared.

"Quick, Billy," shouts I; "follow me. He'll be dhrowned! He's in the main dhrain!"

"Easy," sez Billy, quite cool, layin' hold of my arm. "He's fifty yards from the main dhrain. There he is on his feet again. Oh, great Christopher," sez he, beginning to laugh, "will ye look at him?"

An' troth, though I was heart sorry for the wee man, I could hardly keep my own face straight. He was just like one of them sea-lions bobbin' up out of the tank at the circus, only instead of havin' a sealskin coat on him he was one solid mass of mud an' glar. He turned round a couple of times, gropin' in front of him with his hands, an'

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then he started off straight for the main dhrain.

"This way, Mr. Anthony," I calls out, when I could find my voice. "Come this way."

He started to come towards the voice, all the time gropin' with his hands, an' wandherin' here an' there as if he was playin' blind man's buff, an' at last he made the land. The only feature ye could make out in his face was his mouth, an' that only because he kept spittin' out mud an' bits ot bulrushes.

"What happened to you at all, at all, Mr. Anthony?" sez I, when we got him a sort of a way cleaned. 'Did you trip on anythin'?"

"Take me home," he splutthers; "take me home out of this. An' send word to Miss Armytage that I'm dyin' of typhoid. I will be, too, before breakfast time to-morrow," sez he, spittin' out another mouthful of mud. "There's as much sewage gone down my throat as would give typhoid to a carrion-crow. It was all that dratted old blunderbuss of yours. I can handle an ordinary fowlin'-piece with anybody," sez he, "an' well you know it; but I won't undhertake to stand up again the kick of a field-gun. By heavens, it has a recoil like a howitzer. Take me home, I tell ye; an' if ye ever dig that old infernal machine out of the marsh where it's lyin' this minit, by this an' by that I'll be hanged for ye."



"'Take me home, take me home out of this,' sez he, spittin' out another mouthful of mud."

An' not another word could we get out ot him till we helped him into his own hall, afther persuadin' the housekeeper that it *was* him.

I walked down the road with Billy thinkin' very hard, an' every now an' then takin' a look at his face. But he was as solemn as a judge.

"Look here, Billy," sez I. "Tell me the truth. Did Mr. Anthony put only a fair charge into the empty barrel of that gun?"

"He put a fair charge in," sez Billy. "The only thing I wasn't quite sure of at the time," sez he, backin' away from me a step or two, "was whether he was puttin' it into the empty barrel."

I suppose I shouldn't ha' done it, but afther a minit or so I sat down beside Billy an' laughed till I minded that it was my gun was lyin' at the bottom of the marsh.

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HERE IS SOMETHING NEW! Every reader will remember the dramatic Green Bicycle Case. Ronald Light was found innocent, but the mystery remains—who shot Bella Wright? The writer of this story, after a most careful investigation, here puts forward, in the novel form of mingled fact and fiction, his theory of what actually occurred.

THE GREEN BICYCLE CASE

by

H·TRUEMAN HUMPHRIES

Illustrated by Drawings and Photographs taken on the spot

The circumstances of this sensational trial will be fresh in the memory of all newspaper readers. Briefly, the facts were these: Late on the evening of July 5th, 1919, the body of a young working girl, Bella Wright, was found by a farmer lying beside her bicycle in a lonely country lane in Leicestershire. The doctor first stated that she had met her death through a fall from her bicycle, but the subsequent discovery of a dead bird (stated by the policeman to have been either a raven or a crow, "gorged with blood") led to a re-examination of the girl and the discovery that she had been shot through the head. It was then ascertained that immediately prior to the tragedy the girl had been seen cycling in company with a young man riding a green bicycle. A hue and cry arose, lavish offers of reward were made, but no trace of the green bicycle or of its owner was found until the following February, when, by an extraordinary chance, parts of the bicycle, together with an empty revolver-holster, were recovered from the bottom of a canal. The manufacturers' identification numbers had been filed off, but its ownership was eventually traced to one Light, who was arrested and put on trial for the murder. In the witness-box Light admitted he was the man who was last seen with the girl, that his were the cycle and holster, his were the cartridges found in the canal—cartridges which corresponded with the bullet picked up in the lane—and that he had thrown the bicycle and holster into the canal after filing off the numbers. Nevertheless, he affirmed that he was innocent of the girl's death. Pressed to explain why he maintained his long silence, and why he took steps to hide the cycle and holster, he frankly said that, fearing the non-acceptance of the truth of his story, he was at first afraid to speak; from that he slipped into a policy of concealment, and had to go on with it. Light was acquitted, and the case was written off as another "Unsolved Crime."

These are the facts. What follows is fiction.

I.

IT was Professor Bayne's theory that all human problems were reducible to terms of mathematics. There were times when he declaimed this faith to his secretary in so vehement and violent a fashion that, had Millicent Meston been an ordinary secretary, she would have fled from his presence in terror. To the girl "her professor," as she described him in the intimate circle of her own family, had long ceased to be an enigma. There were moments when he was a veritable Caliban—there were times when he was a frolicsome Puck. This was the side of him that students of mathematics never saw, even in his lightest lectures. These were the occasions when Millicent realized with a start that he was only thirty-five.

The Green Bicycle Case was one which at first glance would not seem to be susceptible to a mathematical solution, and yet——

"Love, hate, joy, grief, pain, pleasure," he said one evening, glaring up from the

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chess problem which was apparently occupying his mind, ' they are the logarithms of emotion."

The heavy oak table at which the professor was seated was bare but for the chessmen and board, a quire of square drawing-paper, and a large, bronze ash-tray. Around him on the walls of his large, lofty, well-lit office were rows of books, from the massive tomes of the "Encyclopædia Britannica" on the lowest shelves to the thin *format* of "Bayne's Note on the Analysis of Unconscious Cerebration." It was a dead Sahara of facts without a solitary oasis of romance.

Here and there about the room hung charts and diagrams of mysterious import, and in a glazed cabinet in one corner was piled a medley of instruments—delicate Ramsay scales detecting half-a-millionth of an ounce, a bolometer that would feel the heat of a candle half a mile away, a microscope, a theodolite, electroscopes, Crookes tubes, spectroscopes with lovely refraction gratings with lines too close together for the microscope to see—and a collection of poisons enough to supply individual choice of death to a whole Suicide Club.

To anyone who did not understand the spirit of system that hid in it, the room was a mess of tangled disorder. But out of the pile of newspapers which lay on the floor every little detail that was useful to the professor would be carefully removed, docketed, précised, classified, and sub-classified, indexed and cross-indexed, and not until every slip was tucked away would that disorderly heap vanish.

The room symbolized his orderly and efficient brain as much as his impetuous scrapping of non-essentials. Life was too short to be tidy so long as everything that served a purpose was in its effective place his old, shabby coat and tousled hair expressed his contempt of vanity.

A CALL had taken Millicent from the room. When she returned it was with that precipitancy which the professor so detested.

"Inspector Pell, of Scotland Yard, to see you."

This interruption breaking the chain of his reasoning, the professor spun round in his chair, glaring at her.

She waited a moment, and then :—

"Shall I show him in ?"

"Eh ? Yes, yes," he said, testily, and retrieved his scattered chessmen.

Turning again at the sound of footsteps, Bayne inquired of the well-set-up man who had entered :—

"Well, inspector ?"

The man seated himself at a motion from the professor, glanced at the girl, and made no immediate reply. Divining the cause of his embarrassment, Bayne said :—

This is Miss Meston, my confidential secretary, and, I might add, my colleague. She has my confidence, and may be entrusted with yours.'

The man nodded.

'To come straight to the point, the Yard wants your help. There have been too many unsolved crimes.' The newspapers are stunting' 'em and crying for scalps. There are questions in the House. Something has got to be done to redeem our prestige. But what, frankly, we don't know. Thought I'd look in and get your views about some of the crimes that've beaten us. There was that Green Bicycle case and—— '

The inspector broke off abruptly, for the professor's attention appeared to be riveted to his chess problem. Would he—could he—help ?

It would have been a strange request to have made of a professor of mathematics had not Professor Bayne figured with such prominence in the Moat Tower and the Parkstone murder cases. In the latter he had proved to fourteen places of decimals that it was humanly impossible for the accused man to have been the person whose footprints were found.

The professor, apparently without having listened, moved three pieces on the board. Then :—

"Well ? But one at a time, please. The Green Bicycle case, you said ? I seem to remember something about it. Very unusual sort of case, wasn't it ? What was the date of the trial ?"

"It opened on June 9th."

"Get my cuttings from June 9th," called the professor to the girl. Then to Pell he said : "The tragedy happened more than a year ago, didn't it ?"

The inspector nodded.

"Unfortunate. I expect many possible clues have disappeared by this time."

Millicent returned to her seat, bearing a pile of newspaper cuttings.

"Read !" commanded Bayne in his lordly way, and lay back comfortably in his chair, closing both eyes as he did so. For one moment only during the long reading did he move ; then he sprang forward in his chair and cried, sharply :—

"A what ? Did you say '*crow*' ? '*Gorged*' with blood ? Read that paragraph again !"

She re-read the paragraph, and he chuckled :—

"Well, well, well !" Then : "Go on, please !"

At the conclusion of the recital of this absorbing narrative the professor aroused

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himself, turned to the inspector, and interrogated him :—

"Have you been to the scene of the tragedy since it happened ? "

"Yes."

"Have you a plan of the place ? "

"No, but I saw the one at Headquarters."

"Just see if you can sketch it from memory."

The man came to the table and sketched the plan on a sheet of the squared paper. The professor examined the sketch for a few minutes, then :—

"Umph ! Was that all ? "

"Yes, I don't think there was anything else on it."

"No other measurements ? "

"No, I'm sure of that."

"This road—is it level ? "

"No. It slopes downwards in this direction," and the inspector inscribed an arrow, adding, "the girl was riding down the slope when she was shot."

"Now, was Miss Wright tall or short ? "

"I believe she was about five feet two inches."

"And this gate here—about how high was it ? "

"I don't know. The police plan did not give the measurement."

"I suppose you cannot say anything about the condition of the hedges hereabouts ? "

"I recollect that most of them had not been trimmed for a long while ; some of them not since the beginning of the war."

"Ah ! "

The professor jumped up, strode to the bookshelves, and deposited two volumes on the table. These he consulted, and then for ten minutes engaged himself in inscribing a mass of figures, symbols, and diagrams on the back of the plan. Suddenly he turned to the inspector and exclaimed :—

"All right, Inspector, I can clear this up. If—*if*, mark you—*the gate's not more than four foot two and the right hedge is thick and high*. Now, meet me at Great Glen Station next Wednesday. I shall go up by the nine-thirty. And bring with you the tenant of the field to which the gate belongs. We'll deal with your other little worries later on."

II.

AS Professor Bayne alighted on the platform of Great Glen Station he was met by Inspector Pell and a weather-beaten farmer in fustian and heavy boots. After introductions the trio drove off behind a speedy little pony, skilfully handled by the inspector.

After covering a few miles of country the inspector, with a "Here we are, sir ! " pulled up the pony, and the three dismounted from the vehicle. Leaving the pony to the care of the farmer, bag in hand the professor, accompanied by Pell, at once commenced his investigations.

"This is the gate, sir," said Pell, pointing to a very rickety-looking wooden gate opening into a field on the right of the lane.

"Oh ! And can you show me the exact spot on the gate where the blood-marks of a bird's feet were found—they were mentioned at the trial ? "

"Just about here, sir," answered Pell, placing his index finger on the top bar of the gate.

"About ? Wasn't the position marked ? "

"No ; but it was about an inch to the left of this knot in the timber."

The professor took from his bag a number of metal pegs, each headed with a white disc, two inches in diameter, and drove one of these into the gate at the point the policeman had indicated. Then with a tape he carefully measured the height of the gate at that place, and uttered a grunt of satisfaction as he noted the measurement in a pocket-book, followed by a veritable trump of triumph as he glanced to the left of the gate and saw a hedge, fully nine feet high and eight feet wide, its untrimmed branches extending beyond the end of the gate.

"It is four-two and the right thick and high," he chuckled.

The inspector then indicated the position at which the body was found, and the farmer, from the pony's head, confirmed it with the words : "Aye, that's the place."

Bayne noted that it was about two feet away from the middle of the gate.

"And now can you show me where the bullet was found ? "

"I'm afraid I cannot say *exactly*," said Pell, a little sarcastically, "but this is within a foot of it," and he took up a position about six yards up the lane, and to the left of the roadway. The professor drove a second peg into the grass.

"And where was the dead bird found ? "

Again Pell gave the approximate spot, and a peg was planted. Then Bayne said, sharply :—

"What happened to the bird ? Was it preserved ? "

"No. I believe it was left on the ground."

"It is not here now, anyway, not even the skeleton. I suppose it has been removed by a field rat," grumbled Bayne. "Never mind. Just help me with this tape." and with the aid of Inspector Pell the professor carefully measured the positions of the pegs in relation to the gate, as well as the height and width of the hedge, and noted the results in his book.

He then fixed the theodolite on a tripod and surveyed the lane, sat on the grass by

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the roadside, and for five minutes studied a mass of numerals and diagrams which he inscribed in his notebook, at the end of which he jumped suddenly to his feet, looked over the gate, and ejaculated: "Ha! There it is!"

Shutting his notebook with a snap, he said:—

"Hold the pony, inspector, and send the farmer with me."

Opening the gate he passed into the field, followed by the farmer, and walked up to a sheep trough which was lying in the grass about twenty-five yards from the gate. This he carefully examined and measured, at the same time plying the farmer with questions:—

"How long had the trough been lying there? Did he feed his sheep in the evening? When were the hedges of the field last trimmed? Was he responsible for trimming the hedges and repairing the gate?"

Then, again setting up the theodolite, he said to the farmer:—

"Now will you please go back to the lane and hold your hand up exactly over the indicator which you will see stuck in the grass?"

The farmer returned to the lane, took up the position, and raised his hand. Bayne took an observation, then, shouting "All right, that will do," unslung his camera and snapped the tumbledown old gate. He then turned round and walked across the field. At the opposite side he stood for some minutes contemplating a light, open fence topped with barbed wire, then made a circuit of the field, paying particular attention to the hedges as he walked. This done, he returned to the waiting men.

ON the following day the professor paid two calls in Leicester. He first visited one of those charming residences which lend distinction to the suburbs of the city, and after nearly an hour he emerged, disappointment written on his face, for Sir Walter Watson was not at home.

His second call was at the police-station, where he arranged for a list of the licensed owners of firearms in that district to be posted to him.

On the third day he spent several hours at Sir Walter's residence, and his persistence must have been rewarded, judging from the manner in which he blithely packed his traps, paid his bill, gave a generous tip to the porter, and strode along to the station booking-office.

One morning, about a month later, the postman delivered to Bayne a sealed and registered postal-packet, the contents of which occupied him for several hours. They were entry forms for a rifle-shooting competition, and each bore a number at its head, whilst the gaps in the typed matter below were filled with ink inscriptions by various hands. The professor carefully scrutinized each form, and deposited it on one or other of two piles, a small one to his right, a larger one to his left. He then subjected the smaller heap to a second scrutiny, at the same time comparing the entries on the forms with the items in the schedule which he had received from the police. He then picked up the four only which remained after this process of elimination, studied them, muttered "My money's on No. 172," and entered the numbers in his notebook. Collecting these papers together, he repacked them, attached a label, and called to Millicent in the adjoining room to bring her shorthand notebook.

After giving orders for the dispatch of the parcel, he commenced to dictate:—

"The Shooting of Bella Wright. Confession——" followed by a recital, the sensational nature of which was evidenced by the expression in Millicent Meston's face as she rapidly plied her pencil. Reaching the end of the confession, he turned to her and whimsically inquired: "And what do you think of that?"

"You're wonderful!" she replied. "But you haven't given me the name of the person who fired the fatal shot. Who was it?"

He pondered for a moment, and then said:—

"For the present we'll call him No. 172."

III.

PROBABLY in no part of England is the sporting spirit stronger than in the districts of which Leicester is the centre; and in the hunting, football, or cricket-field no one was more popular or held in higher esteem than Major the Hon. Sir Walter Watson, member for the Leicester Division. A wealthy man, an enthusiastic patriot, a thorough sportsman, and a generous benefactor of every worthy cause, it was small wonder that whatever "Wally" Watson took in hand the men of his constituency would support.

Therefore, when the *Leicester Chronicle* announced that, in order to revive the waning interest in riflemanship, Major Watson had undertaken the promotion of a Midlanders' Bisley, the success of the enterprise was a foregone conclusion, and when fuller particulars of the forthcoming event were given in the local papers and on the hoardings, and a windowful of magnificent prizes were exhibited at Harmer's Stores in High Street, local interest in the event

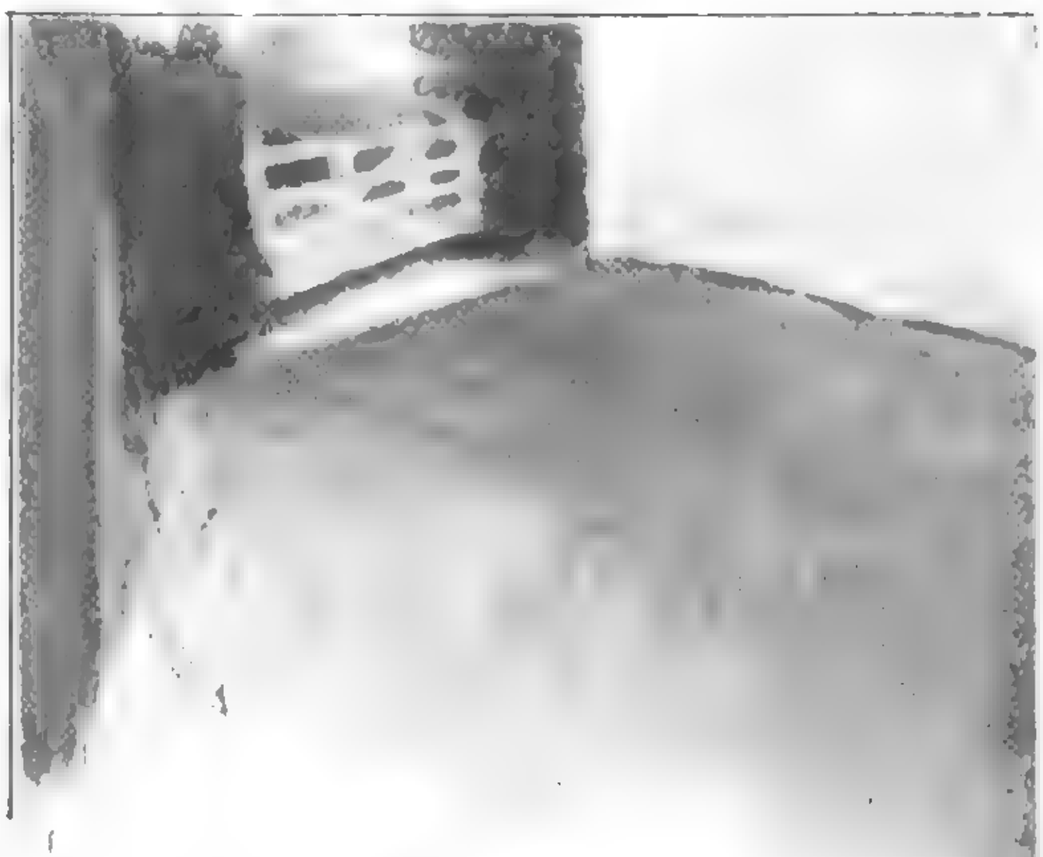
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seriously rivalled that taken in the fortunes of the Leicester City football team. In factory and on farm the " Bisley " was the principal topic of conversation.

The meeting took place on the first Saturday in September, and at nine o'clock in the morning the first batch of competitors arrived at the old Volunteer range.

Satisfaction radiated from the open, healthy face of Major Watson as, sitting in the shade of his shamiana, he explained to Mrs. Lloyd, the Mayoress :—

" You see, we were bound to enclose that special range in order to secure the element of surprise which is the essential part of that test. We sought to reproduce the natural conditions under which men are called upon to use rifles. The competitors enter the enclosure one by one, and are given a sporting rifle. They lie down, up goes the screen, and they have to get in a shot at whatever they see moving before the screen drops. The test calls for expert marksmanship and an instant estimation of distance. It also tests the quickness of the senses. Of course, it is hard lines on the spectators here that they can't see this snap-shooting, but if the range were exposed, competitors would be able to study the targets and estimate the ranges beforehand, and so the ' surprise ' element would disappear."



ABOUT four o'clock, when the stands were crowded with spectators and the relatives of the competitors, Inspector Pell, his jacket off and his sleeves rolled up, displaying arms on which were the marks of perspiration, oil, and soot, quietly slipped into the rear entrance to the enclosed range, deposited a tray of tea, cakes, and bread and butter before the coatless marker seated at a small table to the right of the butts, whispering, " Here you are. Now we sha'n't be long ! "

The man addressed lifted his eyes from the card upon which he was marking the score of a competitor standing in front of him, and revealed the tired features of Professor Bayne.

" I sincerely hope we sha'n't," he said, with a yawn, as he rose and stretched himself, looked again at the number at the head of the card in his hand, and muttered, " 171."

" Shall I pour out your tea ? " inquired the inspector, solicitously.

There was an undercurrent of excitement in Bayne's voice as he quietly said : " No, Pell. Not until the next one has finished." Then, under his breath, he added : " Just go to the back there and clean a rifle. Or, better still, slip behind that rifle-cabinet, and don't show yourself until I call ! "

With a puzzled face Pell retired behind cover. Then Bayne handed the scoring-card to the waiting competitor, and shouted :—

" Next ! "

Following this shout, through the door stepped a youth of about fourteen, dressed in a coarse, brown tweed suit and a soft collar. He walked in with the awkward diffidence of a country boy, met the professor's eyes with a sullen glance, and produced his card.

" Number 172. By George ! you have done well, my boy. If you keep this average you ought to get one of the biggest prizes," said the professor, encouragingly, at which the boy's face brightened. He then explained the conditions of the contest to the boy, warning him to focus his whole attention in readiness for the raising of the screen, or he would not pick up the targets. He then placed four cartridges in the magazine of a rifle, handed the weapon to the boy, and said, " Get ready ! "

As the boy stretched himself on the raised turf, wriggled to secure a comfortable firing posture, and then fixed his eyes on the white screen before him, the professor slipped quietly from his seat and sat on the floor at the boy's side.

" Ready ! "

The boy strained his eyes along the barrel, the professor pulled a signalling-cord, and up went the screen to disclose, about a hundred yards away, the figure of a running hare.

" Crack ! " a puff of smoke as the boy pulled the trigger, and down dropped the screen. A few moments after a bell rang, and Bayne said, " Well done, boy ! "

The youth smiled his gratification and awaited the raising of the screen.

" Ready ! "

The youngster stiffened to a rigid pose, the screen was elevated, the form of a flying partridge arose from the grass fifty yards ahead and whirred upwards.

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"The truth is out, sonny! You need not fear, but you must own up."

'Crack!" a puff of smoke, and down came the screen. Again the bell rang.

Another sharp command, "Ready!" and once more the boy's body and mind centred on the screen, his hand gripped the barrel of the rifle, up went the screen, and two hundred yards away the silhouette of a deer sped across the field of vision. Another sharp "Crack!" Down came the screen. "Tang!" rang the bell, and the professor patted the boy's shoulder.

"Hit the next one and you win the Championship!"

For the fourth and last time the professor called "Ready!" A slightly longer pause than before. The eyes of Bayne fastened to the face of the boy as he tightened his grip on the rifle, focused his eyes on the screen, straining like a hound in leash, then up rattled the screen—a sharp, awful shriek of terror as the boy's grip loosened from the rifle, the weapon tumbled to the floor, his body sagged, and his hands covered his face to hide the horror of the view.

Before him, seventy-six feet away, stood an old, broken-down gate, framed at the right by the hedge, and on the gate sat a black bird.

Quietly the professor called "Pell," and then rose to his feet, bent over the youth, and said, gently:—

"The truth is out, sonny! You need not fear, but you must own up. You can't undo—*that*—but you can clear the character of a misjudged man."

Between them they picked the boy up.

IV.

THE following morning as Millicent Meston emerged from the lift at Dover Street Tube Station her eye

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was arrested by a newspaper scare-bill announcing in large red capitals :—

BELLA WRIGHT CASE.

SENSATIONAL CONFESSION.

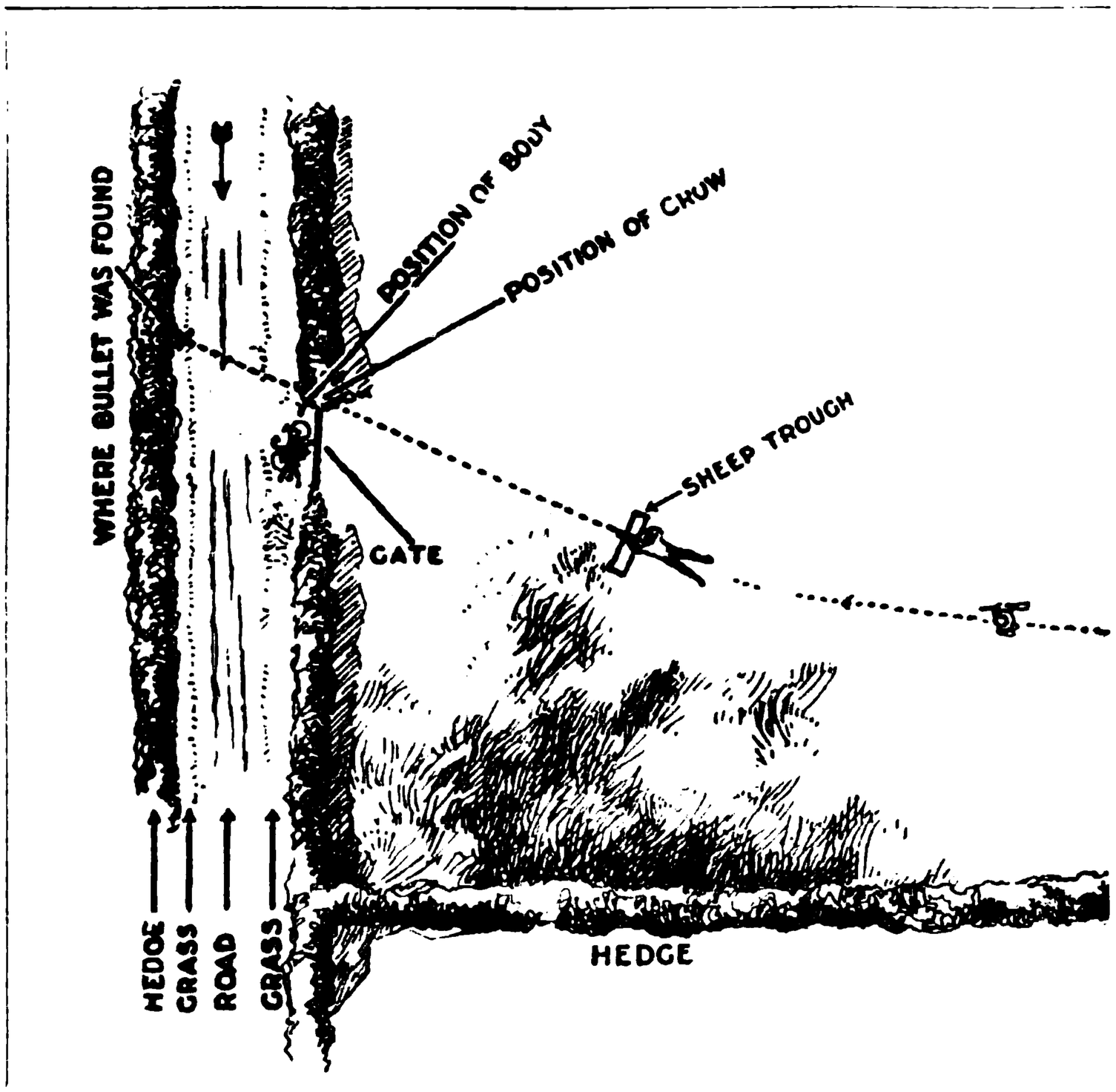
Securing a paper, she retired to a back-water in the moving stream of workgoers and read in the emotional electric phrases of "Our Special Correspondent" the story of the "Bisley," concluding :—

"By courtesy of Professor William Bayne I am able to publish the sensational confession which was signed by the boy after his arrest :—

"'I confess that I shot Bella Wright. It was an accident. I took my father's rifle whilst he was away from home, and went into the fields. I entered the field where the accident happened, climbing through a fence in the corner, and walked towards the gate leading to the road. As I approached the gate I saw a black bird standing on the top bar, near to the hedge on the right. I crept up to a sheep trough which lay in my path, about twenty-five yards from the gate, lay behind it, rested the rifle on it, took careful aim, and fired. As I pulled the trigger a girl, riding a bicycle, passed in front of the fore-sight and crashed to the ground by the gate. Frightened, I fled back home, cleaned the rifle, and hung it up. I did not know that I had killed the girl until the next day, and I have since been afraid to confess.'"

"The whole thing was really absurdly simple," said the professor, looking nearer to thirty-five than she had remembered him looking before. "And it proves beyond doubt that the most abstruse of mysteries may be cleared up by the application of a little commonsense and a little trigonometry. The police had the truth staring them in the face all the time! Here it is!" and taking up one of the press-cuttings, he read: "'And P.C. Hall added the gruesome fact that in an adjoining field was found a dead crow *or* raven that had been gorged with blood!' That piece of 'intelligence,' the validity of which passed unchallenged in the court, and the tremendous significance of which they missed, was the key to the problem, and the starting-point of my investigation.

"Had the police grasped its significance they would not have started on a wild-goose chase after a green bicycle. For what did it



Plan showing where Bella Wright's body was found, and

imply? First, that a bird, with plenty of food around it, would drink human blood. Improbable, and contrary to all known facts. Next, that in the very short time between the tragedy and its discovery the bird could *gorge* itself to death from such a meagre source. That, also, was impossible. Finally, that the effect of the 'gorging' was so rapid that before the bird could move from the scene it fell dead! Well, now—I ask you. And from this followed the finding of the bullet, the hue and cry for the green bicycle, the arrest, confinement, and nearly the hanging of an innocent man!

"When," Bayne proceeded, "I saw that

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paragraph I recalled the habits of the crows which I had observed in India. I have seen them gobble up Dewali flies until they could barely flap away. I have seen them devour carrion as big as themselves, but I have never seen a crow die from 'gorging,' and no naturalist has recorded such a death. The truth underlying this policeman's statement was clear to me. *The bird had been shot!*

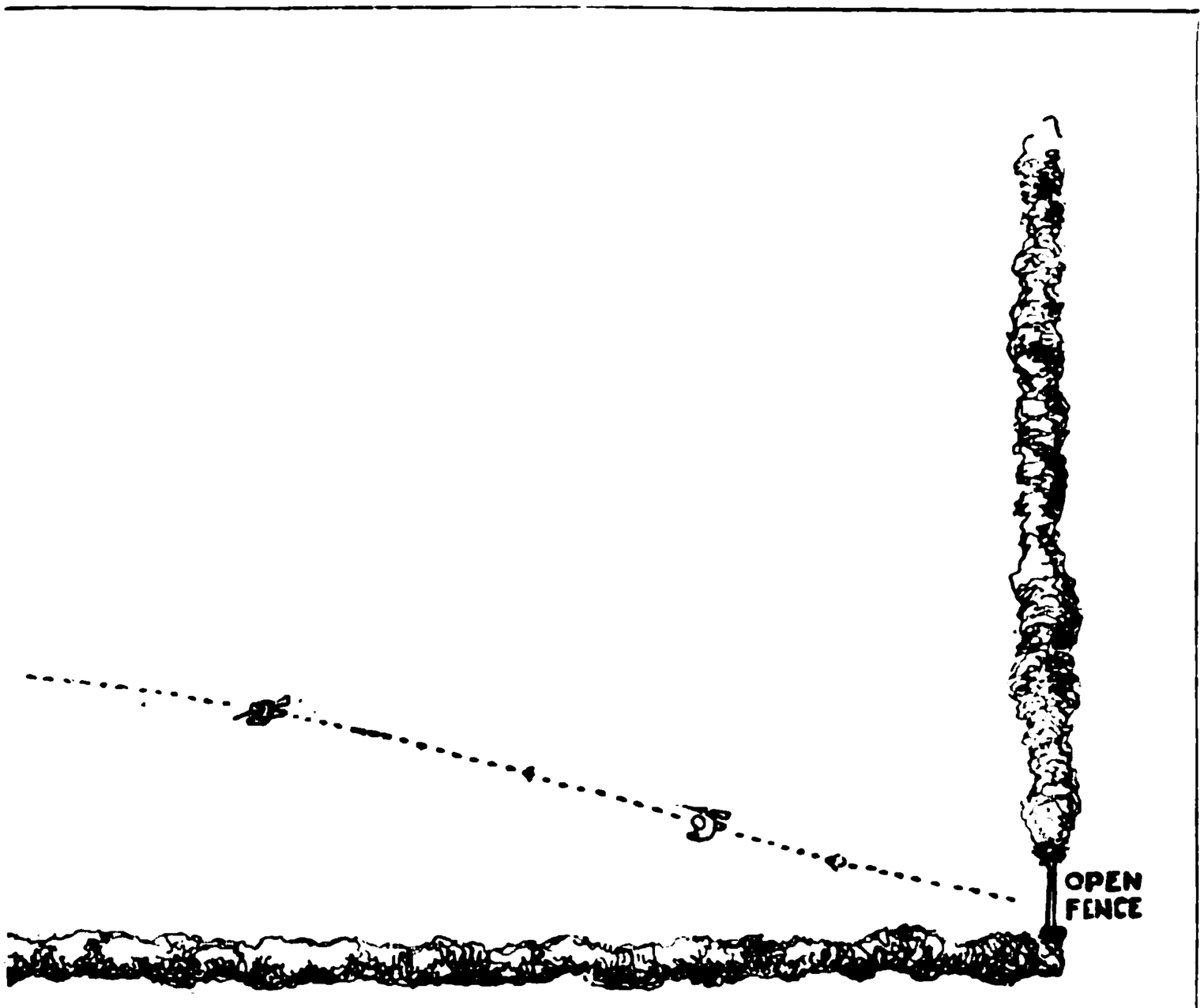
"This point settled to my satisfaction," the professor went on, "I concluded that *if the bird and the girl had been shot at the same time, then they must have been hit by the same bullet.* The only alternative to such a conclusion was that after shooting the girl the murderer stayed to shoot the bird, which obligingly posed for the bullet within a few minutes of the crime! The next question which had to be settled was: of these two objects, which was the one *aimed* at? The crow or the girl? I won't bother you with the mathematics of it, but"—and he placed his pipe on the table and moved the large ash-tray to and fro behind the pipe to illustrate the proposition—"given a small stationary object, such as the bird, and a large moving object, such as the girl, if both are hit with one bullet, by all the laws of probability *that bullet was aimed at the smaller object!*"

"Yes, I see that," said Millicent, "but you are assuming that the bird was stationary?"

"Assuming!" retorted Bayne, indignantly. "Didn't the policeman find the bloody impression of a bird's feet on the gate?"

"Of course. I had forgotten that."

"Such," continued Bayne, pulling at his pipe, "such was the conclusion that I arrived at from reading the printed reports of the trial—that Miss Wright had been accidentally killed by the person who shot the bird. But so far it was only a theory, a theory which was unsound unless"—and he ticked off each point on his fingers—"one, the position of the bird on the gate and the position of the girl's head came within the same elevational line of the bullet's flight; two, the girl's body lay between the gate and the place where the bullet was picked up; three, there was some object between the crow and the road which hid the girl from the person aiming the bullet up to the moment that the trigger was pulled; and four, there was some cogent reason for the presence of the culprit at a position in the field beyond the gate, from which the line of fire and of vision satisfied *all* the foregoing conditions. Each and all of these conditions were essential to the soundness of this 'accident' theory; if but one was lacking the theory was unsound.



illustrating Professor Bayne's theory as to the cause of her death.

"At my request Pell drew from memory a sketch of the very inadequate plan which was submitted at the trial, but with one exception it was of little service to me. However, after questioning Pell on a few minor points, I was so far satisfied that I promised him an early and conclusive solution of the problem. At the same time, I had a notion that I could find the culprit.

"But," he continued, taking a charted paper from his bag, "I admit I was more

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A photograph of the gate by which the body was found—taken from inside the field. The figure outlined in white is firing at the bird on the gate, and the further course of the bullet is shown in the photograph on the opposite page.

than a little surprised, when I saw the scene of the tragedy, to find there not only the four factors I required to establish my theory, but also—why, there was the trough!"

"The trough!" echoed the girl, considerably mystified. "What has the trough to do——?"

With his finger tracing each point on the drawing before him, he explained:—

"This is the plan. Here is the gate, and here the crow. The gate you'll see is four feet two inches high. At the side of the gate, near the crow, is a high and thick hedge extending the whole length of the field. Here is the place where the bullet was found, on the opposite side of the lane to the gate, and a few yards higher up the slope. Now follow the dotted line—that is, the line of flight of the bullet, extended from the point where it was picked up, through the crow, and for a distance of seventy-six feet across the field—and there is the blessed sheep trough!

"Now look at the elevational sketch a minute. To ascertain the position of the girl's head above the top line of the gate I was obliged to take various factors into consideration—her height, the machine she was riding, the fact that she was riding down a slope with the wind behind her, and would therefore most probably be sitting back in the saddle with head held up. All these points were involved. The position of the crow was settled more easily.



An enlargement of the portion of the above photograph shown in the white circle.

"The next step was to trace the course of the bullet backwards from the two points of contact which I had established to the beginning of its flight. This was fairly easy, because, as you see, the course of the bullet from the crow to the girl was an upward one, and therefore the two objects were hit at the early stage in the traverse;

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had it been downwards, then the bullet would have come from a long distance. As it was, it was a matter of a few moments to figure out that the bullet had travelled only about seventy-six feet when it hit the crow, and, don't you see—we are back to that sheep trough again ! Now, is that clear ? "

She nodded.

" I would also ask you to note that the line of fire so reconstructed is exactly the one at which the approach of the girl *is entirely obscured by the hedge !* "

" Why, of course ! " gasped Millicent,

" So now you see that my introduction of the trough into the confession was done on something safer than guesswork ? "

" Yes," she conceded. " But how did you surmise that the boy had entered the field through the open fence ? "

" Look at the position of it ! It is almost in direct line with the trough and the gate ! After settling the point from which the weapon was fired, I said to myself, ' Now, what brought the culprit to this trough ? ' and, turning round—why, there was the fence ! "

" Just one more point, professor. How could you deduce that the culprit was a boy ? Surely *that* was a guess, at any rate ? "

" Guess ! " the professor roared, perhaps too forcibly. " No, woman ! Just common-sense ! To lie on the grass behind a sheep trough and shoot at a sitting bird, to waste ammunition on a useless object and fire across a public thoroughfare to the danger of human life, was obviously the action of a young and thoughtless boy. Also," he supplemented, " I remembered that the accident happened on a Saturday evening, when the grown-ups of those villages make their weekly pilgrimage to Leicester.

" For the rest," he went on, " the strategy I adopted to force a confession—— The story is soon told. Realizing that some very great inducement would be necessary to lure the culprit into the open, I persuaded Sir William Watson to promote the ' Bisley ' and introduce the snap-shooting test. I baited the trap with irresistible prizes, and framed a handicap that was particularly favourable to the youngsters. The gate I used for the target was a copy of the real gate, which I had made from a photograph I took—one gate looks very much like another —and the real terrorizer was the stiff bird on top. Before the meeting all the entry-forms, which gave names, addresses, and ages, were submitted to me. I had no difficulty in parting the men from the boys, and by comparing the latter with a list of the licensed owners of firearms within a four-mile radius of Great Glen, I eliminated all the competitors but four—and competitor No. 172 was one of those four ! "



A photograph of the scene of the tragedy, to which is added an outline of Bella Wright on her bicycle. The white line indicates the course of the bullet after hitting the bird shown on the gate.

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TRICKS I SHOULD LIKE TO DO

by

DAVID DEVANT

ILLUSTRATED BY TOM PEDDIE

SOMETIMES, when I am sitting in an easy chair, with only a cigar and my thoughts for companions, I am reminded of a little magical problem that I have often tried to solve.

I want to do on the stage just what I am then doing in my study, but, of course, something else is to happen. The trick will really begin—if ever I succeed in solving this puzzle—when the smoke from my cigar collects in a little cloud and remains a few feet above my head. And as I sit there, smoking and trying to convince the audience that I am thinking, the little cloud of smoke will drift slightly and, in moving, will gradually form itself into a kind of "smoke statue" of a woman. The smoke will slowly disperse, and the audience will then see a woman floating in mid-air; she will show by her expression and movements of the hands and head that she is a living being.

When the audience have been convinced that the woman is really a living being I shall put down my cigar, stand up, and look rather incredulously at the figure for a few seconds. The figure will then dissolve into a cloud of smoke which will disperse and disappear altogether. I shall return to my easy chair and my cigar, and the curtain will fall slowly.

This is not an "impossible" illusion by any means, but I have not yet hit upon a method which appeals to me.

This illusion reminds me of another which is rather more difficult. I imagine that everyone has seen the illusion in which a woman, reclining on a couch on the stage, floats away from the couch and up above the head of the performer. The magician passes a solid hoop over the figure to prove that the woman is quite isolated (and, in passing, I may say that the hoop is exactly what it is claimed to be—a solid steel hoop). After a few moments the figure slowly sinks down again to the couch.

This is a very effective illusion, but just a little hackneyed nowadays. I have always thought, however, that the fact that the illusion was presented entirely on the stage seemed to rob it of some of its effect. How much better it would be, I think, if the figure, after rising in mid-air, slowly floated away from the stage and passed over the heads of the audience and returned to the stage.

Here, again, we have an illusion which is not impossible, but I have not yet discovered a way out of certain difficulties.

An illusion or trick which seems to be very complicated is not always the most difficult for the performer; on the other hand a plain, apparently simple little trick, can be very bothersome.

Here is an idea which was given to me by a pupil of mine. It seems simple enough, but though I have known of it for years I have



"The little cloud of smoke from my cigar 'smoke statue'

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not been able to find a good way of doing the trick.

The conjurer borrows half a crown, opens his right hand, shows that he has nothing in the hand, places the half-crown on the palm, and closes the hand. He then addresses the owner of the money :—

" You can have various kinds of change for half a crown. What change would you like ? "

We will suppose that the reply is : " Two separate shillings and a sixpence." The conjurer immediately opens his hand and shows two separate shillings and a sixpence.

If the conjurer knew that he was going to be asked for that change the trick would be fairly easy, but that is not the trick. The performer has to be ready to give any change in silver without opening his hand until the end of the trick. My pupil kindly suggested that to make the trick "really difficult" we ought to allow the owner of the half-crown to choose part of his change or all of it in coppers, but I gave an emphatic " No " to that idea. Imagine what would happen if some sweet child of nine, after a little calculation, prompted the owner of the money to ask for a hundred and twenty farthings ! No, the trick is quite difficult enough if you limit the choice to silver, and partly because it is difficult it remains among the tricks I want to do.

Here is another little effect which seems absurdly simple—till you try to do it.

The conjurer has a blotting-pad, some paper, pens, and ink. He asks someone to come up to his table, select a pen, and write anything he pleases in ink. The conjurer holds the paper so that everyone in the audience can see it, and asks his volunteer assistant to hold the blotting-pad in a similar position. The conjurer then blots the writing on the pad, but when he removes the paper the audience see that the writing on the blotting-paper is not reversed — as, of course, it should be. It seems to me that the only way of doing this would be by secretly detaching the sheet of blotting-paper from the pad and turning it over, but how to do this without letting the audience see you do it—to say nothing of the assistant who is holding the blotting-pad—is beyond me at present. The trick appeals to me because it is quite different from any other trick with which I am acquainted.



Let us return to the big stage for a moment. I come on with a magic wand (I have never used one) and a small handkerchief. I place the handkerchief on the end of the wand and start to twirl it round. The handkerchief spins on the end of the wand. The audience see that the handkerchief gets larger and larger until finally it becomes a huge sheet, practically concealing me from the audience, although the very sharp people in the front rows of the stalls will notice that my feet are still on the stage.

Somebody fires a pistol ; there is a crash of cymbals from the orchestra ; the revolving

will gradually form itself into a kind of of a woman."

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sheet disappears in a flash, disclosing four swing-boats. The audience then see that the wand which I used in the first place is now a stout rod of iron and serves as the axis on which the four swing-boats revolve. There are to be two persons in each boat and the whole structure is to be brilliantly illuminated.

I once worked this out—on paper—and I believe my scheme would answer, but there are two difficulties which I cannot get over. The expense of making the apparatus would be small in comparison with the expense of carrying it about the country and paying the small army of assistants who would be required to work it. The other difficulty is the time which would be occupied in setting and striking the illusion; that difficulty is insuperable unless you make the illusion the first item on the programme, and I should strongly object to that idea.

I once mentioned this idea to a pupil of mine. He suggested that for the first little effect—spinning the handkerchief on the end of the wand—I might have a pin on the wand—just to make it easy. I thanked him and asked him to continue with his solution. The handkerchief is to get bigger while it is in motion. . . . He is still thinking about it. And, as a matter of fact, that is the chief difficulty in working out the illusion.

ANOTHER pretty illusion which I want to do is down in my note-book as "The Bubble." A large bubble floats on the stage; if you think this would be too easy you can begin by blowing the bubble from a pipe. After a few moments the audience see the picture of a woman on the bubble, which sinks down on to the table and bursts, disclosing the woman standing on the table.

This is rather a "teaser," and so is the sequel.

The woman is dressed in a plain white frock. At my suggestion she walks down to the audience, and two or three ladies are asked to inspect her white dress and to satisfy themselves that there is no trickery about it.

The woman returns to the stage and lies on a couch. I then ask the audience to name any of the colours which they saw on the bubble—in short, any colour they like. I ask them to watch the white dress on my assistant; the dress slowly becomes dyed with the colour the audience have chosen, and to satisfy the audience that the effect is not produced by coloured lights the assistant walks down to the auditorium again.

Quite a pretty illusion—if I could do it!

Among the little tricks I want to do is an entirely new card trick, but I have not the ghost of an idea of what it is to be. All I do know is that it must be different from the usual card trick.

And I have not got very far with another little trick. I want to borrow some rings—ordinary finger rings—from members of the audience and put them in a glass, take them out of the glass and show them all linked together. Then they are to be unlinked and returned to their owners.

Here is a little idea which forms part of a trick. I have not yet decided on the complete effect, but, roughly, this is the part which forms the stumbling-block at present.

In the course of the trick I have to use an empty cup. A cup is on the table and in the centre of the table there is a tall glass vase. When I am about to use the cup I pretend to be surprised to find that it is full of water. I pour the water into the vase and put the cup down again. Later on I want to use "this empty cup," but it is not empty; it is again full of water, although there is apparently no way of getting water into the cup except by pouring it in in the usual way. I empty the cup into the vase and start the trick again, and again I find the cup full of water, which I pour into the vase. The effect is repeated for just as long as the audience will stand it—or until the vase is full of water. Finally, I decide that I will do the trick some other way, and I call an assistant and ask him to clear away the things from the table, but just as he is about to pick the things up they clear themselves away by—and there my notes stop.

The most difficult trick is not always the most effective. I think the following would be difficult and not very effective because the end would be too long.

I have a number of cards about the size of a double sheet of note-paper and some blue pencils. I also have a very large letter file, which I hand out to anyone in the audience for a moment, so that everyone may be convinced that the file is empty.

I then ask several members of the audience to write any one letter of the alphabet on each of the large cards, using the blue pencils for the purpose so that the audience may see the letters. I then take the cards, cover them with a handkerchief for a moment, and cause them to disappear. I go to the letter case, and the cards are found in their right places there.

After the first card had been shown the audience would naturally guess that all the other cards were in their right places, and so you would have a wearisome repetition of the same effect, and for that reason the trick, which would be very difficult, does not quite please me. At the same time I want to do it because I feel sure that when once I had got on the track of the right method I should find a way of bringing the trick to a sudden

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climax. In thinking out a trick you generally find that it is something like a jig-saw puzzle. When you have got two little bits done you generally see a way of joining them and making them one big bit, and then the rest comes to you.

I was asked some weeks ago how I could make a two-legged man appear effectively as a one-legged man in a play. This is not a trick which I particularly want to do myself, but it reminded me of one which suggested itself to me by my seeing a very handsome tiger-skin rug in the house of a friend. I said to him :—

"Wouldn't it be a fine trick if I could just pick up this rug, give it a shake, and produce a real, live tiger!"

My friend paid me a compliment. He said :—

"Fine trick—very fine. Would you mind waiting till I get to the cellar?"

Every schoolboy has seen the trick of taking a cannon-ball out of a hat. I have often said to myself when I have been doing this trick—it forms part of another trick of mine—"Why am I doing this? Why am I taking a cannon ball out of a hat? Why not out of something else?" So——

I take a large sheet of stiff paper, twist it into a cone-shaped bag, and produce a large silver ball, completely filling the bag. I take it out and it drops on the stage; it is obviously quite solid. I repeat the effect many times, until there is a pile of solid balls (not solid silver!) on the stage, all produced from the paper bag. At the end I untwist the bag and show the plain sheet of paper again.

An exceptionally good orchestra at a music-hall unconsciously suggested an illusion to me. I was waiting for the curtain to rise one evening and thinking that my opening music seemed to be much better than usual when it occurred to me I might make a different entrance altogether. I would dispense with all music, would do without the customary "chord on." When I was in the middle of the stage I would apologize for the absence of the band and ask an assistant if he had seen the lost band. The assistant would reply by handing me a large box.

"What is that?"

"A bandbox, sir."

"Oh, I see—a band in a bandbox—little joke, eh?"

But it would not be a meaningless joke because I should take off the lid, and out would come the missing band in a procession, with their music and music stands, all of them ready to take their places in the orchestra, even down to—or up to—the player of the double-bass. I imagine that his instrument would give me some little trouble, but I am sure it would be worth while. I should have an illusion which people would wish to see more than once.

Of all the illusions which I ever feel I should much like to do I think my favourite is one which was suggested to me by hearing of a dream within a dream; a man dreamt that he was dreaming. I wish to present an illusion—or, rather, a series of tricks and illusions—which will serve as a kind of frame for my customary performance.

The thing would begin in this way. I come on to a bare stage—no draperies, no furniture, no "props" of any kind. I produce—well, we will say a small handkerchief. From the handkerchief I produce a small table. More handkerchiefs are magically produced, and I begin my regular performance with some handkerchief tricks. When they are over I produce from the handkerchiefs all the materials I require for the next trick, and so I go on until I come to my largest illusions—bulky things which are not easily pushed about the stage by a couple of men. The materials for each separate trick and illusion



"I take a sheet of stiff paper, twist it into a cone-shaped bag, and produce a large silver ball."

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would be magically produced just when they were wanted, and after they had been used they would be transported magically to a table at the back of the stage. I would not have a visible assistant at any time during the performance, and at the end I would have all the things I had used grouped at the back of the stage. After all, when one comes to think of it, is it not absurd that a magician who is apparently able to do wonderful things with cannon balls, rabbits, and human assistants should have to have the apparatus used in each trick carried off in the usual way when the trick is over? Surely a real magician should be able to say to his table and the things upon it: "I've done with you, thank you; please go away; run along now."

And then the table ought to obey, and another, laden with the apparatus, all magically produced, for the next trick, should take its place. That would be an ideal way for pesenting a conjuring performance, but I fear that it is never likely to be my way.

A friend to whom I have shown this article kindly suggests that at the conclusion of the performance all the apparatus and "props" I have used should disappear, leaving me, as I started, standing on a bare stage. Perhaps when I know how to begin a performance of this kind I may discover a really good way of bringing it to that conclusion.

"I should take off the lid of the bandbox, and out would come the band in a procession."

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CREATURES OF HABIT

by

E·TEMPLE THURSTON

ILLUSTRATED BY W·HATHERELL·R·I·

RESPECTABILITY is so seldom a real virtue that one scarcely need talk about it as a virtue at all. It is more a luxury, an indulgence, than anything else. There are numbers who pay a price for it, and it is to be found in as many varieties of pattern and quality as the very latest of linoleums; what is more, it is just as cold to the feet.

There are some to whom it is bequeathed —an inheritance. There are some—the great majority—who acquire it by purchase as they go along in life. Just like linoleum, it is a covering for the bare boards of the common daily round of existence, and nowadays can be made to look so much like the real thing, like real marble or elaborate tiling, as would need a Catesby out of the Tottenham Court Road or an expert on the board for the protection of public morals to tell the difference.

My story is not concerned with those to whom it is bequeathed as a legacy. Long generations of habit have made it more than a mere linoleum over those bare boards which compose the floor of every house. To them, it is a carpet of rich velvet pile upon which footsteps fall noiselessly and people walk, arm in arm, all unconsciously every night in evening-dress to dinner.

My story is not with this kind of respectability. My story favours the linoleum variety, the stuff you can buy in any furnishing shop in the Tottenham Court Road, the stuff you can cut with a blunt kitchen knife and which is in common use everywhere.

There is a lot of human nature about that kind of respectability. After long wearing the joints of the boards usually show through. But when just laid down, and if of a substantial quality, it can look exactly like red brick tiling, or oak parquet, or even marble, as though one were living in an Alma Tadema picture.

This is the kind of respectability that interests me most of all, and it is in use in nine-tenths of the houses in England. People who raise loud voices in protest against an improper scene in an improper play walk over their linoleum at home with bare feet, and would assure you that they never feel the cold. People who go boldly to see that improper scene in that improper play, and are amongst those who contribute to the prodigious hiring of opera-glasses from the attendants, lay down a parquet linoleum in their dining-rooms and, with a modern copy of an old piece of furniture, would lead you to think it was real oak parquet, if you did not know any better.

I believe machinery has more to do with this aped respectability than any of us realize. I believe that just as machinery has spoiled our love of work, so it has really spoiled our love of life; that just as it has created a market for imitation, so it has introduced into daily life a certain falseness, a certain quality of pretence that has become almost a vice with nearly every one of us.

I don't think I could live with a cheap reproduction of the Venus de Milo without getting a cheap conception of the beauty of life. I don't think I could play the pianola for long without getting a mechanical conception of music. I don't believe I could be respectable for many years without getting a lopsided conception of what was really right or wrong.

Before steam drove the first wheel round, it seems to me that people must have acted much more upon the dictates of their real conscience. But now, respectability, together with linoleum, has come out of the factories,

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and our floor boards are covered with it rather than the real material woven out of the warp and the weft of life.

THE person of Miss Constantia Martingale is a case in point. By reason of the revenue coming in from the possession of certain house property in the West-end of London, she was able to afford the luxury of respectability in one of the most respectable sideroads off the Brixton Road.

From the front, No. 15 presented all those unmistakable signs of starched and ironed propriety which are to be found expressed in stiff lace curtains, in the eternal aspidistra standing in a glazed earthenware pot in the front window, its leaves just appearing through the space between the curtains. The brass bell-handle was always carefully polished, the steps were always scrupulously white and clean. If there were any sounds of music on Sunday, they were those of Miss Constantia playing one or the other of two hymn tunes she knew on an ancient upright Collard and Collard piano from which you heard the sound of the hammers striking, as well as the metallic vibrations of the strings.

And at the back, although Miss Constantia was no gardener, the little square of grass with its surrounding laurel bushes was religiously in order. A man from the neighbourhood came once a fortnight for two hours and attended to it.

In Morpeth Road, Brixton, Miss Constantia Martingale was considered as respectable as any of the twenty-five respectable families which gave those places of residence an atmosphere dear to the adherents of the cult of the aspidistra. Those lace curtains, that polished bell-knob, even the two hymn tunes, and certainly that Sunday attendance of divine worship in her best apparel, had become so close a habit in the life of Miss Constantia Martingale that to have deprived her of them would have been to bring the whole world in dust and *débris* about her ears.

They were not, however, the complete habits of her life. One other she had which, if the truth be admitted, would have wrought by its absence as violent a cataclysm in her life as the destruction of that atmosphere in Morpeth Road.

Once every quarter it was her invariable habit to go up to the West-end to collect her rents. She did this from motives of economy. Long ago she had argued it all out satisfactorily to herself that it was foolish of her to pay a percentage out of her livelihood to a solicitor for collecting her rents when she could quite easily do the business herself. One day out of every quarter of the year was not so very considerable an amount of time lost from the desirable atmosphere of Morpeth Road.

The rents to be collected were nearly all from shops and close together—Nos. 15 to 21, all in one street. She had only to walk from one to another, with her black silk bag on her arm, as though she were a customer out purchasing her necessities for the day.

They were very polite to her. Undoubtedly they recognized her respectability. Never once in all the time she had collected these rents had she been met with discourtesy or incivility.

"Here's the landlord," they said amongst themselves, when they saw her arrive punctually every quarter-day, but to her face they always called her Miss Martingale.

She took her little sums of money; carefully she put each one in her black silk bag, and she went away, not to be seen again by them until the next quarter-day. Vaguely they knew she lived in Brixton. Some of them had her address when the occasion of repairs necessitated their writing to her. None had ever had the curiosity to go down and see No. 15, Morpeth Road, or they would have realized how accurate their estimation of her respectability had been.

She went away, right out of that district, generally on foot, and, it usually being then about three in the afternoon, she made her way to one of those small confectioners' shops where they supplement their trade in bread and pastries and cakes with the service of lunch or tea, with no pretensions of aspiring to the functions of a restaurant.

Seated at a table there in a back part of the shop, where almost invariably she was alone, Miss Martingale ordered two ham sandwiches and a glass of port. It was cheap port, immature, sweet, and strong. To expect any other class of wine in a pastry-cook's is ill-advised. But Miss Martingale was blind to vintage qualities. She liked the pastry-cook's port because it was so sweet and so strong.

And while she consumed this refreshment she laid the black silk bag on the table, with the help of a little notebook checking off the various amounts of her rents and counting them for the second time that day.

For some time after the two sandwiches and the glass of port were consumed she was still at work. Finance was not a strong point with her. Over and over again her calculations proved incorrect. There were division and multiplication and addition all to be done, and her fingers played on the American oilcloth-covered table, lending assistance to her efforts until they ached.

It was the most natural sequence of events that, while in the throes of these calculations, she should order another glass of port. It

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"It was the most natural sequence of events that, while in the throes of these calculations, she should order another glass of port."

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helped her to the completion of her work. She felt the fire of it tingling in her blood. It seemed to make her brain so clear, alert, and vigorous that addition, multiplication, and division became almost child's play to her quickened perceptions.

"I don't think I could manage it without my second glass," she often said to the waitress who attended to her; and no doubt it was true. The trouble lay in the fact that not only did it assist her in her mathematical calculations, but left in its wake a subtly enjoyable feeling of lassitude: a feeling that those back premises of the pastry-cook's shop were the most pleasant she had ever known; a feeling that it would be a happy circumstance to stay there for a very long time; that there was nothing in the world so serious as to really matter one way or another; that No. 15, Morpeth Road, nice, quiet, respectable though it was, was a little dull compared with this, and that, viewed through a mist of lassitude, it seemed very far away.

Always for some little while she pondered over these pleasant feelings; fingered her empty glass again and again, but always in the end she beckoned to the waitress, and invariably, as though it were a decision not completely arrived at, she said:—

"I think I might have another glass of port."

ONCE every quarter, before a certain magistrate in one of the many police-courts existing in the metropolis, they bring a certain elderly spinster lady, who, sitting on some pavement or gloriously disporting herself in some doorway, has been found intoxicated and incapable. She never makes any disturbance. Though it may be with difficulty, it is with no wilful obstruction on her part that the policeman conveys her to the police-station where she spends the night.

"Whatever the old lady does," said one of the officers on one occasion, "she seems to do it respectably."

For the first three occasions she took it sorely indeed when she found where she was in the morning. She begged them with tears rolling heavily down her cheeks to keep it out of the papers.

They laughed at her.

"One 'ud think you was the wife of a Cabinet Minister," they said. "There are thirty other cases like yours this morning."

"But, you see, I live in Morpeth Road, Brixton," she explained through her tears. "If they knew there, I don't know what would happen!"

"Wait till you move to Carlton 'Ouse Terrace, missis," she was told. "Then you can begin to fret about it."

She gave her excuses, still through her tears, to the magistrate. He just had time to listen to what she said, nodding his head in quick comprehension.

"Collecting rents—what you might call a sudden rush of money to the head. Five shillings. Next."

It was cursory—it was abrupt. On consideration she was grateful for that. It drew no attention to her case. But very possibly it had the effect of belittling the enormity of it in her mind. She said to herself as she went home:—

"They wouldn't take it like that in Morpeth Road."

Two or three quarters later, when she appeared for the second time, the magistrate looked at her sharply.

"Sorry to see you again," said he. "Rents?"

"Yes," she replied, only whimpering this time.

"Sch! Sch! Sch! Five shillings. Next."

The third time, he just said, "Rents?"

And so every quarter it became the habit of that court to try Miss Constantia Martingale for drunkenness and incapability, and every quarter-day, when she left No. 15 in the morning, it had become her habit to say to her maid:—

"I shall stay with a friend of mine in London to-night."

And then one day, between the Michaelmas and the Christmas quarter, to his considerable astonishment, the magistrate saw Miss Constantia Martingale before him.

"You?" said he.

She bent her head.

"But rents are not due in November. What's happened?"

"I came up," said she, tremulously, "to see about a few repairs."

The magistrate sat upright in his seat upon the bench, and there shot from his eyes a severity that concealed his sense of the ridiculous from those only who did not know him well.

"Repairs!" said he. "No—no—we can't have that. We allow that you may be a creature of singular habit, but not of frequent custom. You will be coming up to buy a latch for one of your back doors next. There is no end to this. Rents—yes; but repairs—oh, no!—oh, no! I can't allow you repairs. Three days without the option. Next!"

When Miss Constantia returned after three days to Morpeth Road she explained to her maid how pressing her friends had been.

"But I must not leave you alone so long again," said she. "It's not right. I'm sure it's not right. I sha'n't stay longer than one night next time."

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SCORING OFF JEEVES

by

P. G. WODEHOUSE

ILLUSTRATED BY A·WALLIS MILLS

IT gave me a nasty jar, I can tell you. You see, what happened was this. Once a year Jeeves takes a couple of weeks' vacation and biffs off to the sea or somewhere to restore his tissues. Pretty rotten for me, of course, while he's away. But it has to be stuck, so I stick it; and I must admit that he usually manages to get hold of a fairly decent fellow to look after me in his absence.

Well, the time had come round again, and Jeeves was in the kitchen giving the understudy a few tips about his duties. I happened to want a stamp or something, or a bit of string or something, and I toddled down the passage to ask him for it. The silly ass had left the kitchen door open, and I hadn't gone two steps when his voice caught me squarely in the eardrum.

"You will find Mr. Wooster," he was saying to the substitute chappie, "an exceedingly pleasant and amiable young gentleman, but not intelligent. By no means intelligent. Mentally he is negligible—quite negligible."

Well, I mean to say, what!

I suppose, strictly speaking, I ought to have charged in and ticked the blighter off properly in no uncertain voice. But I doubt whether it's humanly possible to tick Jeeves off. Personally, I didn't even have a dash at it. I merely called for my hat and stick in a marked manner and legged it. But the memory rankled, if you know what I mean. We Woosters do not lightly forget. At least, we do—some things—appointments, and people's birthdays, and letters to post, and all that—but not an absolute bally insult like the above. I brooded like the dickens.

I was still brooding when I dropped in at the oyster-bar at Buck's for a quick bracer. I needed a bracer rather particularly at the moment, because I was on my way to lunch with my Aunt Agatha. A pretty frightful ordeal, believe me or believe me not. Practically the nearest thing to being disembowelled. I had just had one quick and another rather slower, and was feeling about as cheerio as was possible under the circs, when a muffled voice hailed me from the north-east, and, turning round, I saw young Bingo Little propped up in a corner, wrapping himself round a sizable chunk of bread and cheese.

"Hallo-allo-allo!" I said. "Haven't seen you for ages. You've not been in here lately, have you?"

"No. I've been living out in the country."

"Eh?" I said, for Bingo's loathing for the country was well known. "Whereabouts?"

"Down in Hampshire, at a place called Ditteredge."

"No, really? I know some people who've got a house there. The Glossops. Have you met them?"

"Why, that's where I'm staying!" said young Bingo. "I'm tutoring the Glossop kid."

"What for?" I said. I couldn't seem to see young Bingo as a tutor. Though, of course, he did get a degree of sorts at Oxford, and I suppose you can always fool some of the people some of the time.

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'What for? For money, of course! An absolute sitter came unstitched in the second race at Haydock Park," said young Bingo, with some bitterness, "and I dropped my entire month's allowance. I hadn't the nerve to touch my uncle for any more, so it was a case of buzzing round to the agents and getting a job. I've been down there three weeks."

"I haven't met the Glossop kid."

"Don't!" advised Bingo, briefly.

"The only one of the family I really know is the girl." I had hardly spoken these words when the most extraordinary change came over young Bingo's face. His eyes bulged, his cheeks flushed, and his Adam's apple hopped about like one of those india-rubber balls on the top of the fountain in a shooting-gallery.

"Oh, Bertie!" he said, in a strangled sort of voice.

I looked at the poor fish anxiously. I knew that he was always falling in love with someone, but it didn't seem possible that even he could have fallen in love with Honoria Glossop. To me the girl was simply nothing more nor less than a pot of poison. One of those dashed large, brainy, strenuous, dynamic girls you see so many of these days. She had been at Girton, where, in addition to enlarging her brain to the most frightful extent, she had gone in for every kind of sport and developed the physique of a middle-weight catch-as-catch-can wrestler. I'm not sure she didn't box for the 'Varsity while she was up. The effect she had on me whenever she appeared was to make me want to slide into a cellar and lie low till they blew the All-Clear.

Yet here was young Bingo obviously all for her. There was no mistaking it. The love-light was in the blighter's eyes.

"I worship her, Bertie! I worship the very ground she treads on!" continued the patient, in a loud penetrating voice. One or two fellows had come in, and McGarry, the chappie behind the bar, was listening with his ears flapping. But there's no reticence about Bingo. He always reminds me of the hero of a musical comedy who takes the centre of the stage, gathers the boys round him in a circle, and tells them all about his love at the top of his voice.

"Have you told her?"

"No. I haven't had the nerve. But we walk together in the garden most evenings, and it sometimes seems to me that there is a look in her eyes."

"I know that look. Like a sergeant-major."

"Nothing of the kind! Like a tender goddess."

"Half a second, old thing," I said. "Are you sure we're talking about the same girl? The one I mean is Honoria. Perhaps there's a younger sister or something I've not heard of?"

"Her name is Honoria," bawled Bingo, reverently.

"And she strikes you as a tender goddess?"

"She does."

"God bless you!" I said.

"She walks in beauty like the night of cloudless climes and starry skies; and all that's best of dark and bright meet in her aspect and her eyes. Another bit of bread and cheese," he said to the lad behind the bar.

"You're keeping your strength up," I said.

"This is my lunch. I've got to meet Oswald at Waterloo at one-fifteen, to catch the train back. I brought him up to town to see the dentist."

"Oswald? Is that the kid?"

"Yes. Pestilential to a degree."

"Pestilential! That reminds me, I'm lunching with my Aunt Agatha. I'll have to pop off now, or I'll be late."

IN Society circles, I believe, my Aunt Agatha has a fairly fruity reputation as a hostess. But then, I take it she doesn't ballyrag her other guests the way she does me. I don't think I can remember a single meal with her since I was a kid of tender years at which she didn't turn the conversation sooner or later to the subject of my frightfulness. To-day, she started in on me with the fish.

"Bertie," she said—in part and chattily—"it is young men like you who make the person with the future of the race at heart despair!"

"What-ho!" I said.

"Cursed with too much money, you fritter away in selfish idleness a life which might have been made useful, helpful, and profitable. You do nothing but waste your time on frivolous pleasures. You are simply an anti-social animal, a drone——" She fixed me with a glittering eye. "Bertie, you must marry!"

"No, dash it all!"

"Yes! You should be breeding children to——"

"No, really, I say, please!" I said, blushing richly. Aunt Agatha belongs to two or three of these women's clubs, and she keeps forgetting she isn't in the smoking-room.

"You want somebody strong, self-reliant, and sensible, to counterbalance the deficiencies and weaknesses of your own character. And by great good luck I have found the very girl. She is of excellent family—plenty of money, though that does not matter in your case. She has met you; and, while there is naturally much in you of which she disapproves, she does not dislike you. I

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know this, for I have sounded her—guardedly, of course—and I am sure that you have only to make the first advances——"

"Who is it?" I would have said it long before, but the shock had made me swallow a bit of roll the wrong way, and I had only just finished turning purple and trying to get a bit of air back into the old windpipe. "Who is it?"

"Sir Roderick Glossop's daughter, Honoria."

"No, no!" I cried, paling beneath the tan.

"Don't be silly, Bertie. She is just the wife for you."

"Yes, but look here——"

"She will mould you."

"But I don't want to be moulded."

Aunt Agatha gave me the kind of look she used to give me when I was a kid and had been found in the jam cupboard.

"Bertie! I hope you are not going to be troublesome."

"Well, but I mean——"

"Lady Glossop has very kindly invited you to Ditteredge Hall for a few days. I told her you would be delighted to come down to-morrow."

"I'm sorry, but I've got a dashed important engagement to-morrow."

"What engagement?"

"Well—er——"

"You have no engagement. And, even if you had, you must put it off. I shall be very seriously annoyed, Bertie, if you do not go to Ditteredge Hall to-morrow."

"Oh, right-o!" I said.



"There was no mistaking it. The love-light was in the blighter's eyes."

A MAN may be down, but he is never out. It wasn't two minutes after I had parted from Aunt Agatha before the old fighting spirit of the Woosters reasserted itself. Ghastly as the peril was which loomed before me, I was conscious of a rummy sort of exhilaration. It was a tight corner, but the tighter the corner, I felt, the more juicily should I score off Jeeves when I got myself out of it without a bit of help from him. Ordinarily, of course, I should have consulted him and trusted to him to solve the difficulty; but after what I had heard him saying in the kitchen, I was dashed if I was going to demean myself. When I got home I addressed the man with light abandon.

"Jeeves," I said, "I'm in a bit of a difficulty."

"I'm sorry to hear that, sir."

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"Yes, quite a bad hole. In fact, you might say on the brink of a precipice, and faced by an awful doom."

"If I could be of any assistance, sir——"

"Oh, no. No, no. Thanks very much, but no, no. I won't trouble you. I've no doubt I shall be able to get out of it all right by myself."

"Very good, sir."

So that was that. I'm bound to say I'd have welcomed a bit more curiosity from the fellow, but that is Jeeves all over. Cloaks his emotions, if you know what I mean. Wears the mask and what not.

HONORIA was away when I got to Ditteredge on the following afternoon. Her mother told me that she was staying with some people named Braythwayt in the neighbourhood, and would be back next day, bringing the daughter of the house with her for a visit. She said I would find Oswald out in the grounds, and such is a mother's love that she spoke as if that were a bit of a boost for the grounds and an inducement to go there.

Rather decent, the grounds at Ditteredge. A couple of terraces, a bit of lawn with a cedar on it, a bit of shrubbery, and finally a small but goodish lake with a stone bridge running across it. Directly I'd worked my way round the shrubbery I spotted young Bingo leaning against the bridge smoking a cigarette. Sitting on the stonework, fishing, was a species of kid whom I took to be Oswald the Plague-Spot.

Bingo was both surprised and delighted to see me, and introduced me to the kid. If the latter was surprised and delighted too, he concealed it like a diplomat. He just looked at me, raised his eyebrows slightly, and went on fishing. He was one of those supercilious striplings who give you the impression that you went to the wrong school and that your clothes don't fit.

"This is Oswald," said Bingo.

"What," I replied, cordially, "could be sweeter? How are you?"

"Oh, all right," said the kid.

"Nice place, this."

"Oh, all right," said the kid.

"Having a good time fishing?"

"Oh, all right," said the kid.

Young Bingo led me off to commune apart.

"Doesn't jolly old Oswald's incessant flow of prattle make your head ache sometimes?" I asked.

Bingo sighed.

"It's a hard job."

"What's a hard job?"

"Loving him."

"Do you love him?" I asked, surprised. I shouldn't have thought it could be done.

"I try to," said young Bingo, "for Her sake. She's coming back to-morrow, Bertie."

"So I heard."

"She is coming, my love, my own——"

"Absolutely," I said. "But touching on young Oswald once more. Do you have to be with him all day? How do you manage to stick it?"

"Oh, he doesn't give much trouble. When we aren't working he sits on that bridge all the time, trying to catch tiddlers."

"Why don't you shove him in?"

"Shove him in?"

"It seems to me distinctly the thing to do," I said, regarding the stripling's back with a good deal of dislike. "It would wake him up a bit, and make him take an interest in things."

Bingo shook his head a bit wistfully.

"Your proposition attracts me," he said, "but I'm afraid it can't be done. You see, She would never forgive me. She is devoted to the little brute."

"Great Scot!" I cried. "I've got it!"

I don't know if you know that feeling when you get an inspiration, and tingle all down your spine from the soft collar as now worn to the very soles of the old Waukeesis? Jeeves, I suppose, feels that way more or less all the time, but it isn't often it comes to me. But now all Nature seemed to be shouting at me "You've clicked!" and I grabbed young Bingo by the arm in a way that must have made him feel as if a horse had bitten him. His finely-chiselled features were twisted with agony and what not, and he asked me what the dickens I thought I was playing at.

"Bingo," I said, "what would Jeeves have done?"

"How do you mean, what would Jeeves have done?"

"I mean what would he have advised in a case like yours? I mean you wanting to make a hit with Honoria Glossop and all that. Why, take it from me, laddie, he would have shoved you behind that clump of bushes over there; he would have got me to lure Honoria on to the bridge somehow; then, at the proper time, he would have told me to give the kid a pretty hefty jab in the small of the back, so as to shoot him into the water; and then you would have dived in and hauled him out. How about it?"

"You didn't think that out by yourself, Bertie?" said young Bingo, in a hushed sort of voice.

"Yes, I did. Jeeves isn't the only fellow with ideas."

"But it's absolutely wonderful."

"Just a suggestion."

"The only objection I can see is that it would be so dashed awkward for you. I

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mean to say, suppose the kid turned round and said you had shoved him in, that would make you frightfully unpopular with Her."

"I don't mind risking that."

The man was deeply moved.

"Bertie, this is noble."

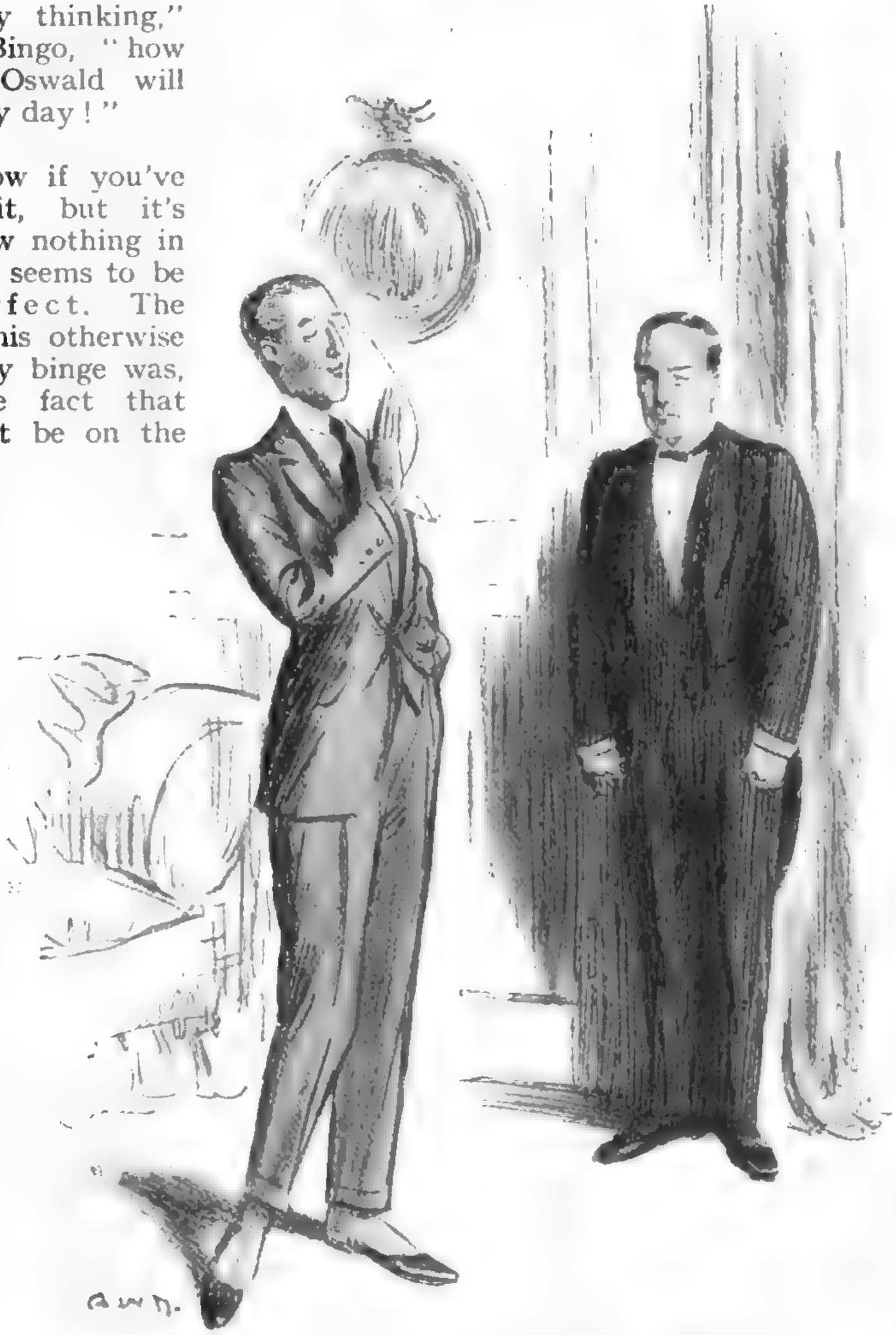
"No, no."

He clasped my hand silently, then chuckled like the last bit of water going down the waste-pipe in a bath.

"Now what?" I said.

"I was only thinking," said young Bingo, "how fearfully wet Oswald will get. Oh, happy day!"

I DON'T know if you've noticed it, but it's rummy how nothing in this world ever seems to be absolutely perfect. The drawback to this otherwise singularly fruity binge was, of course, the fact that Jeeves wouldn't be on the spot to watch me in action. Still, apart from that there wasn't a flaw. The beauty of the thing was, you see, that nothing could possibly go wrong. You know how it is, as a rule, when you want to get Chappie A on Spot B at exactly the same moment when Chappie C is on Spot D. There's always a chance of a hitch. Take the case of a general, I mean to say, who's planning out a big movement. He tells one regiment to capture the hill with the windmill on it at the exact moment when another regiment is taking the bridgehead or something down in the valley; and everything gets all messed up. And then, when they're chatting the thing over in camp that night, the colonel of the first regiment says, "Oh, sorry! Did you say the hill with the windmill? I thought you said the one with the flock of sheep." And there you are! But, in this case, nothing like that could happen, because Oswald and Bingo would be on the spot right along, so that all I had to worry about was getting Honoria there in due season. And I managed that all right, first shot, by asking her if she would come for a stroll in the grounds with me, as I had something particular to say to her.



"'Jeeves,' I said, 'I'm in a bit of a difficulty.'"

She had arrived shortly after lunch in the car with the Braythwayt girl. I was introduced to the latter, a tallish girl with blue eyes and fair hair. I rather took to her—she was so unlike Honoria—and, if I had been able to spare the time, I shouldn't have minded talking to her for a bit. But business was business—I had fixed it up with Bingo to be behind the bushes at three sharp, so I got hold of Honoria and steered her out through the grounds in the direction of the lake.

"You're very quiet, Mr. Wooster," she said.

Made me jump a bit. I was concentrating pretty tensely at the moment. We had just come in sight of the lake, and I was casting a keen eye over the ground to see that everything was in order. Everything appeared to be as arranged. The kid Oswald was hunched up on the bridge; and, as Bingo wasn't visible, I took it that he had got into position. My watch made it two minutes after the hour.

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"Eh?" I said. "Oh, ah, yes. I was just thinking."

"You said you had something important to say to me."

"Absolutely!" I had decided to open the proceedings by sort of paving the way for young Bingo. I mean to say, without actually mentioning his name, I wanted to prepare the girl's mind for the fact that, surprising as it might seem, there was someone who had long loved her from afar and all that sort of rot. "It's like this," I said. "It may sound rummy and all that, but there's somebody who's frightfully in love with you and so forth—a friend of mine, you know."

"Oh, a friend of yours?"

"Yes."

She gave a kind of a laugh.

"Well, why doesn't he tell me so?"

"Well, you see, that's the sort of chap he is. Kind of shrinking, diffident kind of fellow. Hasn't got the nerve. Thinks you so much above him, don't you know. Looks on you as a sort of goddess. Worships the ground you tread on, but can't whack up the ginger to tell you so."

"This is very interesting."

"Yes. He's not a bad chap, you know, in his way. Rather an ass, perhaps, but well-meaning. Well, that's the posish. You might just bear it in mind, what?"

"How funny you are!"

She chucked back her head and laughed with considerable vim. She had a penetrating sort of laugh. Rather like a train going into a tunnel. It didn't sound overmusical to me, and on the kid Oswald it appeared to jar not a little. He gazed at us with a good deal of dislike.

"I wish the dickens you wouldn't make that row," he said. "Scaring all the fish away."

It broke the spell a bit. Honoria changed the subject.

"I do wish Oswald wouldn't sit on the bridge like that," she said. "I'm sure it isn't safe. He might easily fall in."

"I'll go and tell him," I said.

I SUPPOSE the distance between the kid and me at this juncture was about five yards, but I got the impression that it was nearer a hundred. And, as I started to toddle across the intervening space, I had a rummy feeling that I'd done this very thing before. Then I remembered. Years ago, at a country-house party, I had been roped in to play the part of a butler in some amateur theatricals in aid of some ghastly charity or other; and I had had to open the proceedings by walking across the empty stage from left upper entrance and shoving a tray on a table down right. They had impressed it on me at rehearsals that I mustn't take the course at a quick heel-and-toe, like a chappie finishing strongly in a walking-race; and the result was that I kept the brakes on to such an extent that it seemed to me as if I was never going to get to the bally table at all. The stage seemed to stretch out in front of me like a trackless desert, and there was a kind of breathless hush as if all Nature had paused to concentrate its attention on me personally. Well, I felt just like that now. I had a kind of dry gulping in my throat, and the more I walked the farther away the kid seemed to get, till suddenly I found myself standing just behind him without quite knowing how I'd got there.

"Hallo!" I said, with a sickly sort of grin—wasted on the kid, because he didn't bother to turn round and look at me. He merely wiggled his left ear in a rather peevish manner. I don't know when I've met anybody in whose life I appeared to mean so little.

"Hallo!" I said. "Fishing?"

I laid my hand in a sort of elder-brotherly way on his shoulder.

"Here, look out!" said the kid, wobbling on his foundations.

It was one of those things that want doing quickly or not at all. I shut my eyes and pushed. Something seemed to give. There was a scrambling sound, a kind of yelp, a scream in the offing, and a splash. And so the long day wore on, so to speak.

I opened my eyes. The kid was just coming to the surface.

"Help!" I shouted, cocking an eye on the bush from which young Bingo was scheduled to emerge.

Nothing happened. Young Bingo didn't emerge to the slightest extent whatever.

"I say! Help!" I shouted again.

I don't want to bore you with reminiscences of my theatrical career, but I must just touch once more on that appearance of mine as the butler. The scheme on that occasion had been that when I put the tray on the table the heroine would come on and say a few words to get me off. Well, on the night the misguided female forgot to stand by, and it was a full minute before the search-party located her and shot her on to the stage. And all that time I had to stand there, waiting. A rotten sensation, believe me, and this was just the same, only worse. I understood what these writer-chappies mean when they talk about time standing still.

Meanwhile, the kid Oswald was presumably being cut off in his prime, and it began to seem to me that some sort of steps ought to be taken about it. What I had seen of the lad hadn't particularly endeared him to me, but it was undoubtedly a bit thick to let him

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"There was a scream in the offing, and a splash. 'Help!' I shouted. 'I say! Help!'"

pass away. I don't know when I have seen anything more grubby and unpleasant than the lake as viewed from the bridge; but the thing apparently had to be done. I chucked off my coat and vaulted over.

It seems rummy that water should be so much wetter when you go into it with your clothes on than when you're just bathing, but take it from me that it does. I was only under about three seconds, I suppose, but I came up feeling like the bodies you read of in the paper which "had evidently been in the water several days." I felt clammy and bloated.

At this point the scenario struck another snag. I had assumed that directly I came to the surface I should get hold of the kid and steer him courageously to shore. But he hadn't waited to be steered. When I had finished getting the water out of my eyes and had time to take a look round, I saw him about ten yards away, going strongly and using, I think, the Australian crawl. The spectacle took all the heart out of me. I mean to say, the whole essence of a rescue, if you know what I mean, is that the party of the second part shall keep fairly still and in one spot. If he starts swimming off on his own account and can obviously give you at least forty yards in the hundred, where are you? The whole thing falls through. It didn't seem to me that there was much to be done except get ashore, so I got ashore. By the time I had landed, the kid was half-way to the house. Look at it from whatever angle you like, the thing was a wash-out.

I was interrupted in my meditations by a noise like the Scotch express going under a bridge. It was Honoria Glossop laughing. She was standing at my elbow, looking at me in a rummy manner.

"Oh, Bertie, you are funny!" she said. And even in that moment there seemed to me something sinister in the words. She had never called me anything except "Mr. Wooster" before. "How wet you are!"

"Yes, I am wet."

"You had better hurry into the house and change."

"Yes."

I wrung a gallon or two of water out of my clothes.

"You *are* funny!" she said again. "First proposing in that extraordinary roundabout way, and then pushing poor little Oswald into the lake so as to impress me by saving him."

I managed to get the water out of my throat sufficiently to try to correct this fearful impression.

"No, no!"

"He said you pushed him in, and I saw you do it. Oh, I'm not angry, Bertie. I think it was too sweet of you. But I'm quite sure it's time that I took you in hand. You certainly want someone to look after

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you. You've been seeing too many moving-pictures. I suppose the next thing you would have done would have been to set the house on fire so as to rescue me." She looked at me in a proprietary sort of way. "I think," she said, "I shall be able to make something of you, Bertie. It is true yours has been a wasted life up to the present, but you are still young, and there is a lot of good in you."

"No, really there isn't."

"Oh, yes, there is. It simply wants bringing out. Now you run straight up to the house and change your wet clothes or you will catch cold."

And, if you know what I mean, there was a sort of motherly note in her voice which seemed to tell me, even more than her actual words, that I was for it.

AS I was coming downstairs after changing, I ran into young Bingo, looking festive to a degree.

"Bertie!" he said. "Just the man I wanted to see. Bertie, a wonderful thing has happened."

"You blighter!" I cried. "What became of you? Do you know——?"

"Oh, you mean about being in those bushes? I hadn't time to tell you about that. It's all off."

"All off?"

"Bertie, I was actually starting to hide in those bushes when the most extraordinary thing happened. Walking across the lawn I saw the most radiant, the most beautiful girl in the world. There is none like her, none. Bertie, do you believe in love at first sight? You do believe in love at first sight, don't you, Bertie, old man? Directly I saw her, she seemed to draw me like a magnet. I seemed to forget everything. We two were alone in a world of music and sunshine. I joined her. I got into conversation. She is a Miss Braythwayt, Bertie — Daphne Braythwayt. Directly our eyes met, I realized that what I had imagined to be my love for Honoria Glossop had been a mere passing whim. Bertie, you do believe in love at first sight, don't you? She is so wonderful, so sympathetic. Like a tender goddess——"



"Oh, Bertie, you are funny!"

At this point I left the blighter.

TWO days later I got a letter from Jeeves.

"... The weather," it ended, "continues fine. I have had one exceedingly enjoyable bathe."

I gave one of those hollow, mirthless laughs, and went downstairs to join Honoria. I had an appointment with her in the drawing-room. She was going to read Ruskin to me.

Next month: "Sir Roderick comes to lunch."

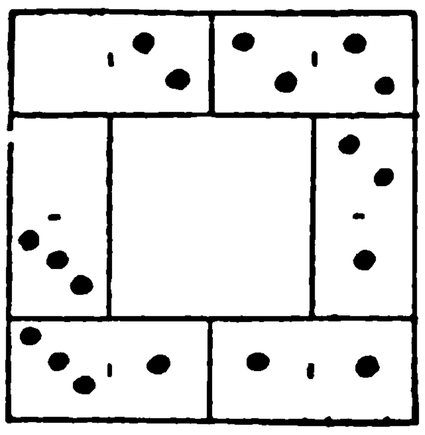
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PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

584.—THREE DOMINO FRAMES.

It will be seen that with six dominoes I have formed a frame so that the pips add up 6 on every side. Now, from the remaining dominoes form two new square frames in exactly the same manner (with six dominoes each) so that the sides of one shall add up 12 and the other 18. Remember that the three frames have to be built up at the same time from one set, so no domino can be repeated, and you must place 1 against 1, 2 against 2, and so on, in the usual way.



585.—A CLOCK PUZZLE.

The following very interesting little clock puzzle is sent to me by Mr. N. O. Jasper. There is only one possible solution to it. At what time are the two hands of a clock so situated that, reckoning as minute points past XII, one is exactly the square of the distance of the other?

586.—AN AMUSING DEFINITION.

Sometimes it is quite perplexing to identify a common object from a quaint, though quite accurate, description of it. A friend suddenly sprang this on me: "I have just seen something with two heads, one tail, four legs on one side and two legs on the other. What was it?" Can the reader guess?

587.—MONKEY AND PULLEY.

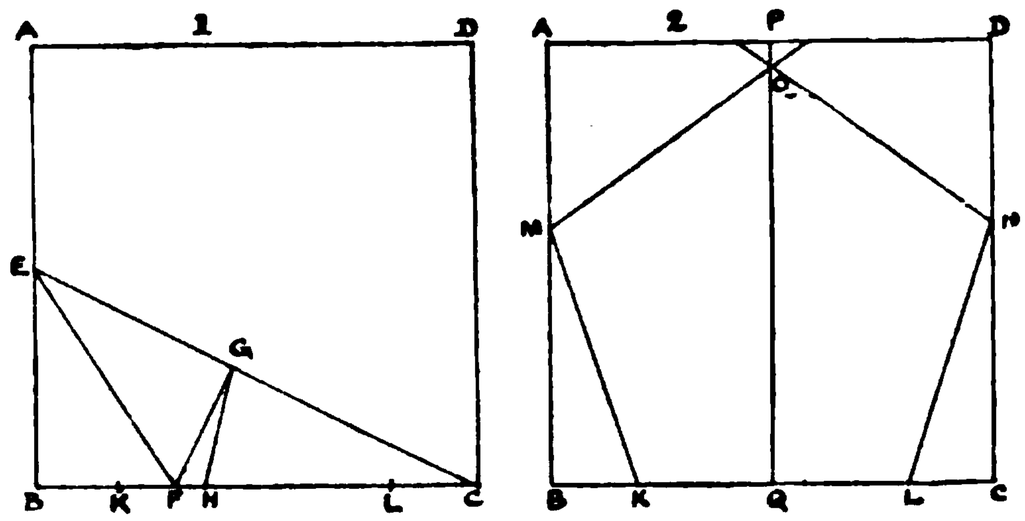
Here is a funny tangle sent to me by a correspondent (M. M.). It is a mixture of Lewis Carroll's "Monkey and Pulley," Loyd's "How old was Mary?" and some other trifles. But it is quite easy if you have a pretty clear head.

A rope is passed over a pulley. It has a weight at one end and a monkey at the other. There is the same length of rope on either side and equilibrium is maintained. The rope weighs 4oz. per foot. The age of the monkey and the age of the monkey's mother together total 4 years. The weight of the monkey is as many pounds as the monkey's mother is years old. The monkey's mother was twice as old as the monkey was when the monkey's mother was half as old as the monkey will be when the monkey is three times as old as the monkey's mother was when the monkey's mother was three times as old as the monkey. The weight of the rope and the weight at the end was half as much again as the difference in weight between the weight of the weight and the weight and the weight of the monkey. Now, what was the length of the rope?

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

579.—FOLDING A PENTAGON.

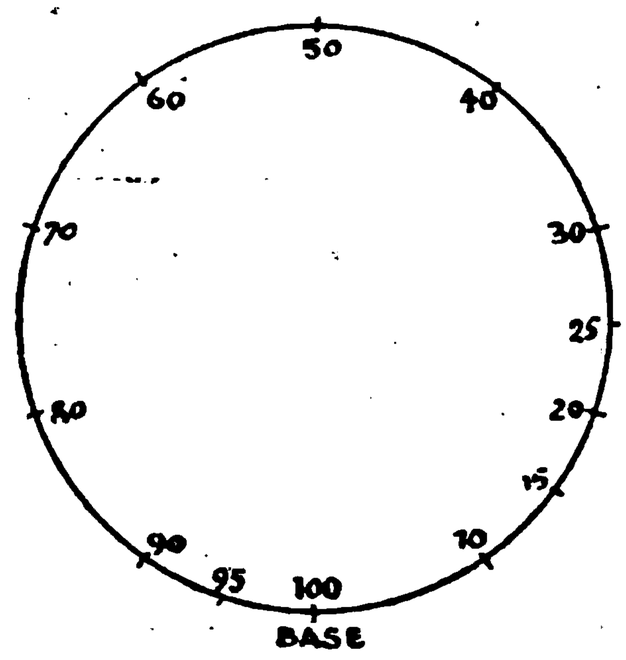
Fold A B on itself and find the mid point E. Fold through E C. Lay E B on E C and fold so as to get E F and F G. Make C H equal to C G. Find K, the mid point on B H, and make C L equal to B K. B C is said to be divided in medial section, and we have found K L, the side of the pentagon. Now (see second diagram) lay K M and L N equal to K L, so that M and N may lie on B A and C D respectively. Fold P Q and lay M O and N O equal to K M and L N.



Then K M O N L is the pentagon required. For this solution I am indebted to a little book, "Geometrical Exercises in Paper Folding," by T. Sundara Row (Madras, 1893).

580.—EXPLORING MOUNT NEVEREST.

Dump 5 rations at 90 mile point and return to base (5 days). Dump 1 at 95, return to base and dump 1 at 90, stopping there (1 day). Dump 2 at 80 and return to 90 (2 days). Fetch one from 95 and dump it at 80, stopping there (1 day). Dump 1 at 70 and return to 80 (1 day). Return to base (1 day). We have thus left 1 at 70 and 1 at 90. Now dump 6 at 10 and 1 at 15, returning to 10 (7 days). Dump 2 at 20 and 1 at 25, returning to 20 (3 days). Dump 1 at 30, returning to 20, picking up 1 at 25 (1 day). Fetch 1 at 15 to dump at 30 (1 day). March to 50, 70, and 90 (3 days). March to base (½ day). These 26½ days cannot, I think, be reduced. If the route had been in a straight line of 100 miles across a desert, I believe the shortest time necessary is 104 days, but the reader will find it difficult.



581.—TIMING THE MOTOR-CAR.

As the man can walk 27 steps while the car goes 162, the car is clearly going six times as fast as the man. The man walks 3½ miles an hour: therefore the car was going at 21 miles an hour.

582.—A MUSICAL ENIGMA.

I have no solution yet, but suspect it has something to do with "Don't be flat. Be upright and be natural." This is a mere suggestion.

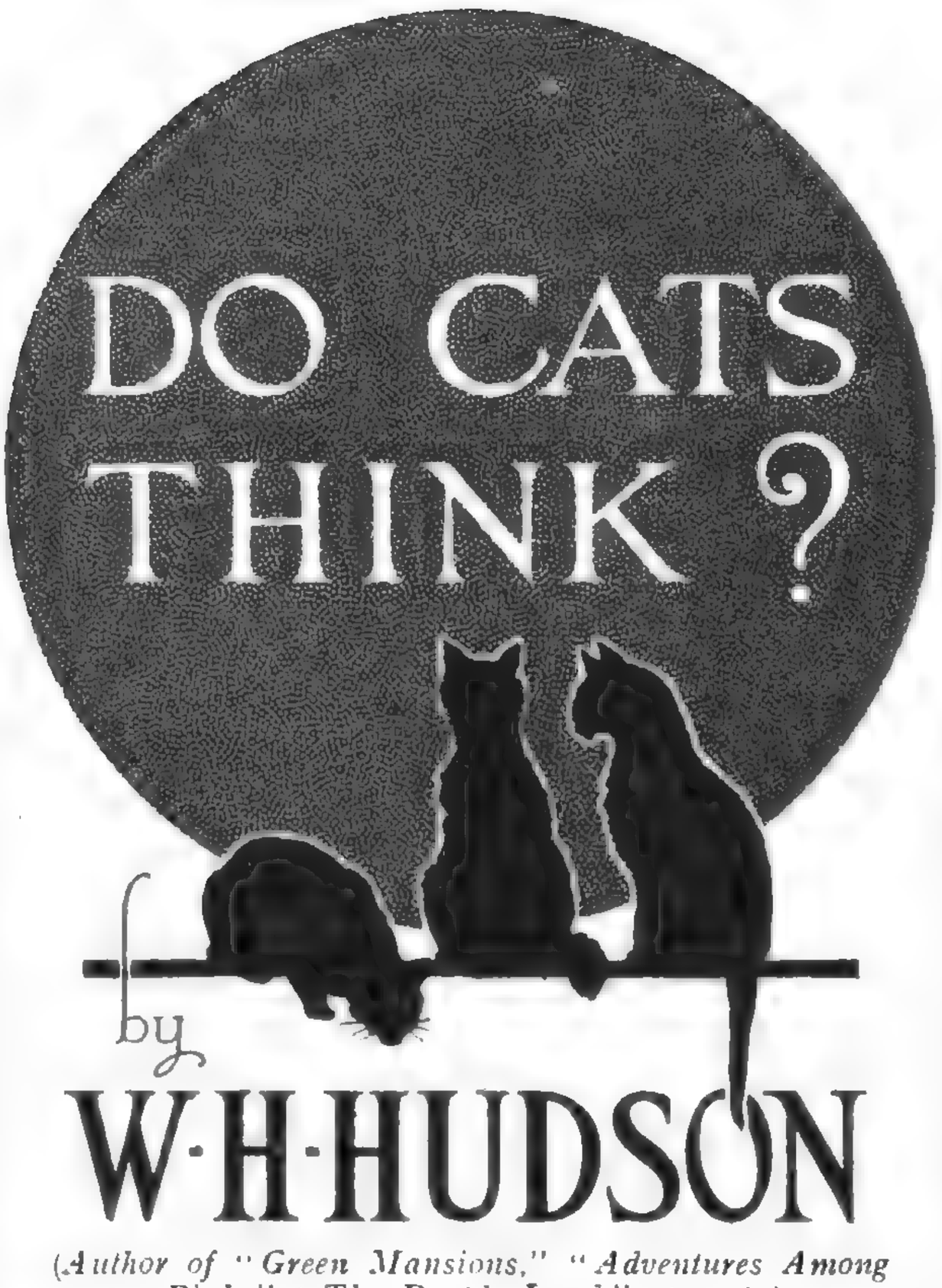
583.—A NEW ALPHABET PUZZLE.

The following is a solution: DUCKS, FROG, VEX, JIB, WALTZ, NYMPH. As the Q is always followed by two vowels it must be the letter omitted.

572.—ANOTHER VICTORIAN ENIGMA.

Scores of correspondents have suggested EMPTY, and I think this is probably the intended answer. I have seen no other word anything like so good.

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(Author of "Green Mansions," "Adventures Among Birds," "The Purple Land," etc., etc.)

ILLUSTRATED BY TOM PEDDIE

II.

AN Editorial note at the foot of an article on the above subject in the August number of this magazine inviting correspondence has resulted in an abundant shower of letters, sufficient I think to make a good-sized volume, from all over the land, with others from Continental countries, and some from outlandish places still farther removed. The narratives received relate to a great variety of animals, and perhaps the most interesting, as showing the power to reflect in our poor relations, are about pet monkeys in India and Africa. Some of these may find a use at a future time; at present I can only express my warm thanks to those who have placed so much good material in my hands. In the small space available here I must confine myself to the subject of cats and their ability to think.

Quite a large number of the letters contain accounts of cats that have found out by observation and practice how to do difficult things, as, for instance, the opening of doors by fiddling at the handle or latch until they have mastered the trick. Or, when this has been impossible, of finding out a way of communicating their wishes to the people of the house. In one instance the cat, unable to get a door open himself, would always go to the big dog of the house, who could open most doors; and the dog would know just what he was wanted for, and was pleased to render this small service to his friend.

It came as a surprise to me to find that more cats than the one I described in a former paper have acquired the habit of begging from seeing it in dogs. It was by thinking the cat made the discovery that by assuming this unnatural posture a readier attention would be given to its wants. The cat acquires the trick from the dog, but begs in a different, a more cat-like, a less obtrusive way. The dog can never understand why there is not an instant response to its begging. The cat who has not been taught the trick, but has learned it himself, sits up vertically with its forepaws hanging down like arms, and remains in this position without a sound, and as patient and still as when waiting and watching for a mouse. The expected or hoped-for morsel, like the mouse, will come in due time: if not, not.

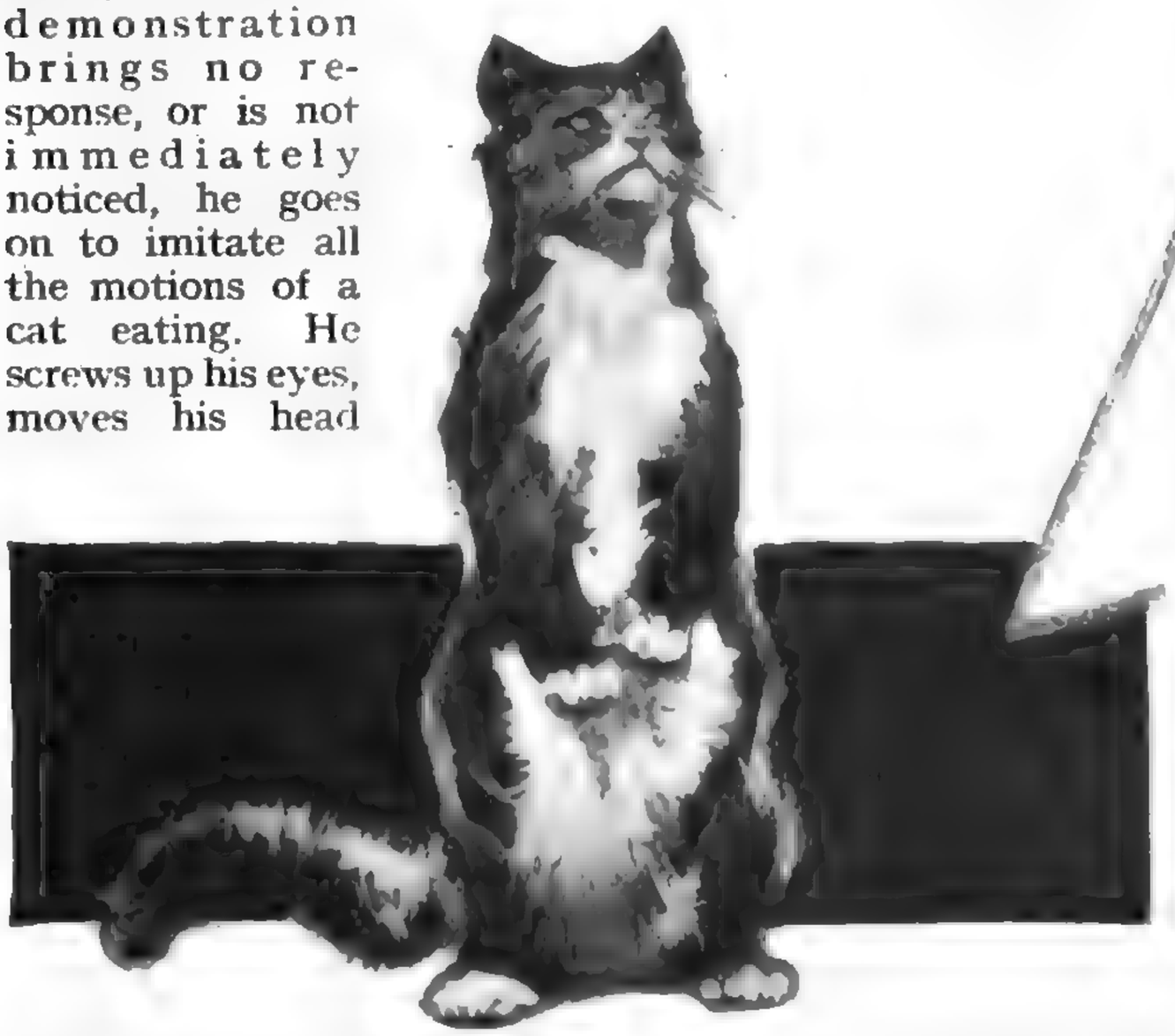
There are other curious instances of cats finding out a way of calling attention to their wants. One relates to a cat in Scotland, named Major, a small, compact, powerful, and very natural cat, who would not sit or lie close to the fire, but preferred sitting on a table some distance from it. He was a great rat-hunter, rats being very numerous in the place, and when he was old and had lost his best teeth and could no longer kill a rat

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quickly by biting, it was observed that he dragged a struggling rat he had captured to the stone steps of the house and pounded the rat's head on the stones until it was dead. As an act of this kind, which is common enough in birds, is not instinctive in the cat, it can only be set down to observation and experience.

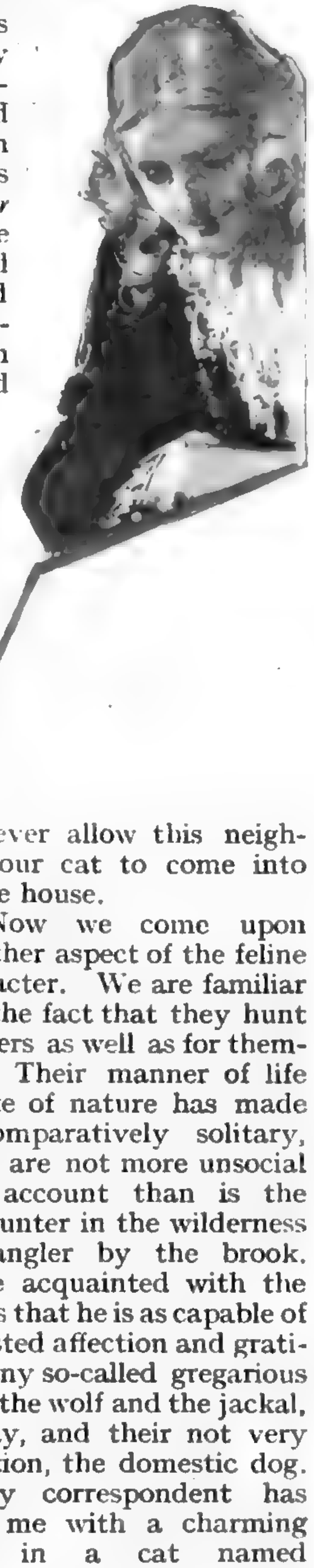
The way this cat had discovered of indicating his desire to be fed was most remarkable. He invariably appeared in the dining-room at meal times, and if no notice was taken of him he would trot off to the kitchen where there was always to be found a dish of hard crusts put by for another purpose. With one of these crusts in his mouth he would return, and jumping into a chair so as to make his presence conspicuous to the diners, he would begin gnawing, or rather pretending to gnaw, the hard crust, and making as much ado over it as possible until some food on a plate was put down for him, whereupon he would immediately drop the crust and concentrate on his dinner.

Now, I should have thought, and so, I believe, would any reader of the above instance, that no second cat in the land could have hit upon so original and far-fetched a device as this Scotch animal, but I have received a similar instance from Chard, in Somerset, and in this second one the cat goes one better, since he performs the trick without the crust. This one also has the habit of attending at all meals, and seats himself on a chair so as to command a view of the table. As soon as the eating is in full swing he begins grinding and clicking his teeth, and if this demonstration brings no response, or is not immediately noticed, he goes on to imitate all the motions of a cat eating. He screws up his eyes, moves his head from side to side as if laboriously trying to masticate a tough piece of gristle.



"The cat acquires the trick of begging from the dog, but begs in a different, a more cat-like way."

Another amusing instance of a greatly favoured cat getting what he wants in an indirect way comes from Gloucestershire. He was particular, not to say fastidious, about his food, and always had it in a plate put on the floor. One day he came in and sat down before the plate, but declined to eat. The housekeeper, knowing what was in his mind, told him sharply that he would get nothing more till he had eaten that. One can only suppose that Puss knew what was in *her* mind. After a while he stood up and trotted out of the room and returned by-and-by followed by the cat from next door, an underfed animal glad to devour anything he could get. He quickly licked the plate clean, and then his entertainer was rewarded with the more delicate fare he had desired, and concerning which his olfactories had given him notice. On no other occasion did he ever allow this neighbour cat to come into the house.



Now we come upon another aspect of the feline character. We are familiar with the fact that they hunt for others as well as for themselves. Their manner of life in a state of nature has made them comparatively solitary, but they are not more unsocial on this account than is the human hunter in the wilderness or the angler by the brook. Everyone acquainted with the cat knows that he is as capable of disinterested affection and gratitude as any so-called gregarious animal—the wolf and the jackal, let us say, and their not very nice relation, the domestic dog.

A lady correspondent has supplied me with a charming instance in a cat named "Jim," a sad poacher whose poaching was finally his

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undoing. One day he ate some poison intended for vermin, and came home apparently in a dying condition. She administered a dose of brandy and castor oil and he crawled off and disappeared for several hours. Then he reappeared, quite recovered, and laid an offering at the lady's feet—half of a rat—the tail half. He had never brought her anything before and never did again. She adds that he probably intended giving her the whole rat, but was hungry after his illness and was unable to resist the temptation of eating a part himself.

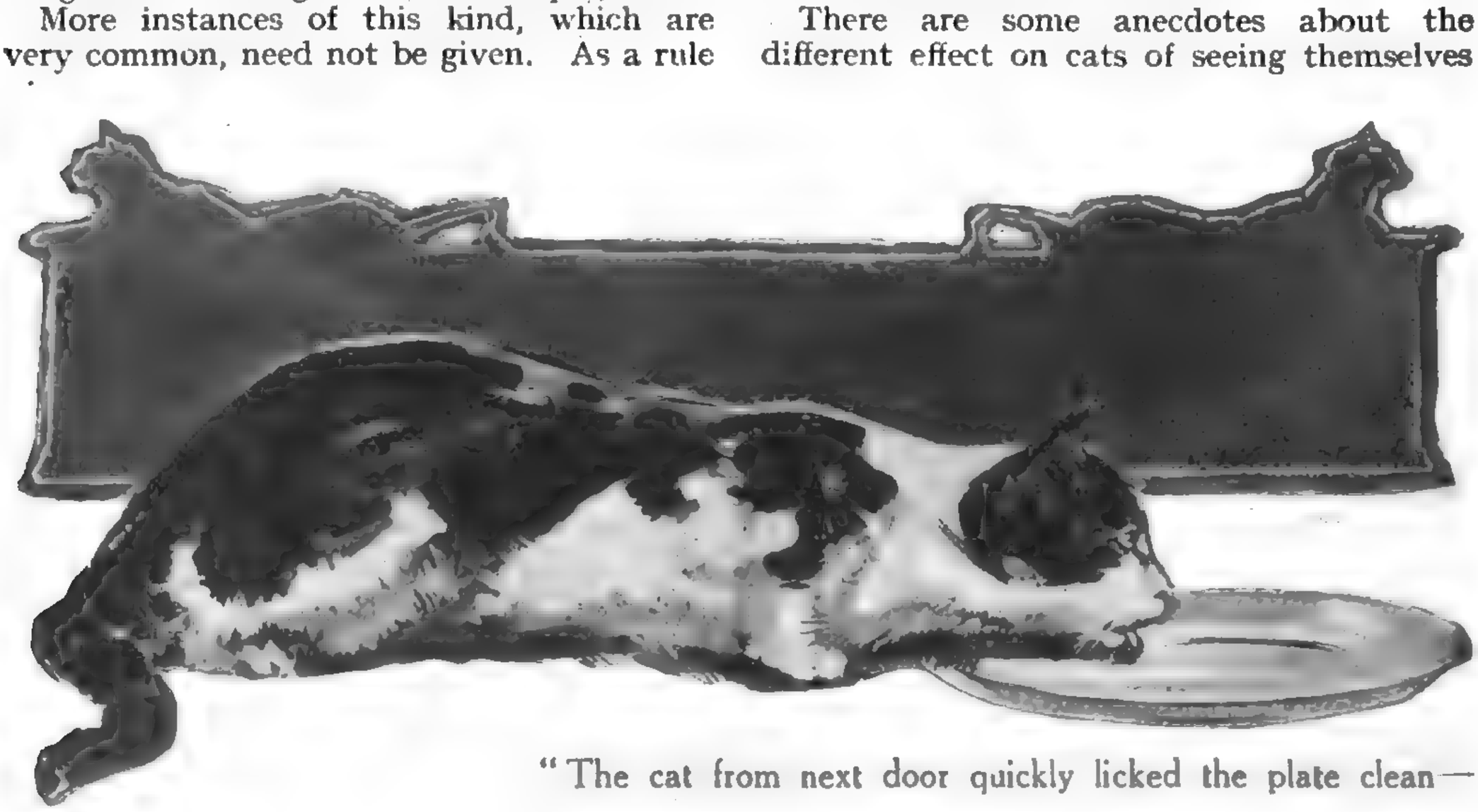
I have known many cats both in this country and in South America that have regularly or frequently brought in their captures to the master or mistress of the house, and as the hunting cat often confines himself to certain species he has found out how to circumvent—a rabbit or partridge, let us say—his gifts in such cases are gratefully accepted. But the cat's tastes in food do not always correspond with those of his human fellow-creatures, so that his presents of game are not invariably appreciated. The main point in the foregoing instance is that the cat was of a selfish disposition and hunted for himself alone, and that in this case his gratitude to his mistress overcame his greed. The higher nature conquered.

More instances of this kind, which are very common, need not be given. As a rule the cat is readier to take than to give, as he no doubt knows that the beings he lives with in a domestic state are the greatest of all animals, able to compass all things, so that the cat's ministrations are not needed.

It is not, however, only in the matter of food and shelter from the storm, with bed and firing and caresses added, that he looks up to us. Here, for instance, is an anecdote of a cat prettily named Aspronla (modern Greek), who had her kittens in a cupboard downstairs, and after some days took them one by one upstairs to the drawing-room to give them a change and exhibit them to the family. After allowing them to play for half an hour on the carpet, she laboriously carried them all down again to their bed. This task was repeated every day: then on one occasion the lady of the house, seeing puss struggling with one of her kittens on the stairs, took pity on her and carried them all down for her. From that time onward she would not carry the kittens down herself. She would bring them up as usual with much labour, and after they had had their half an hour's play on the carpet she would take them one by one to her mistress, and, laying them at her feet, insist on having them carried down for her.

Another interesting case of this kind is of a puss who suffered intense pain in bringing out her first litter, and who in some way was relieved by her mistress. There were many more litters to follow during this cat's life, and she never suffered again as on the first occasion, but invariably when her time came she would go crying as if terrified at the prospect before her, to her mistress, and insist on her attendance in the room until the anxious business was over.

There are some anecdotes about the different effect on cats of seeing themselves in a looking-glass, also about showing portraits to a cat. As a rule it is not looked at; it is simply a flat surface with marks or colours on it which mean nothing. And here the cat is, mentally, no lower than many primitive human beings or savages. My American friend and correspondent, Mr. Charles Finger, who edits a monthly called *All's Well*, has given me an account of a boy in Tierra del Fuego, who, for no reason,



"The cat from next door quickly licked the plate clean—

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became attached to him and followed him about like a dog during his rambles in that outlandish place. Finger showed a picture or portrait of a woman to this boy and asked him what it was. The boy was greatly puzzled; he held the paper or card before him at all angles and distances, turning it about, yet not able to say what it was. Then, reproached for his stupidity, he held it close to his face and stared again until the tears actually came into his eyes. Finally he had to be told that it was a representation of a human being, a woman, and in the end he managed to understand it. Yet this same boy would pick up a flint which he would instantly detect among hundreds of flints as the one suited to his purpose. With a few deft blows with another flint he would shape it into a very small arrow-head, then put it in his mouth and, turning it about with his tongue, bite the sharp edges with his teeth, and in five minutes there would be the finished arrow-head with serrated edges.

The cat, too, like the Fuegian boy, has his arts and accomplishments, useful in his feline state, but he is not, like the monkey, a seeker after useless knowledge. It is only when the monkey has grown



—and then his entertainer was rewarded with the more delicate fare he had desired."

to man that this idle curiosity begins to bear fruit, as the author of that clever little book, "Our Simian World," has just been telling us.

But the cat's mind is not always in the condition of the Fuegian boy's with regard to pictures. A correspondent writes from Chard, Somerset: "Have you ever come across any instance of cats recognizing photographs? My dear old Fluff was still a kitten, although we had had time to get attached to each other, when I was sent from home for a lengthy change of air. Fluff was found more than once standing on a chair, his forepaws resting on the back of it, gazing fixedly up at a cabinet-size full-length portrait of myself, recently taken, placed on the wall above. After this had been

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noticed my father would often take the cat up and say, 'Where is your little master?' and instantly he would run, and, jumping upon a chair, begin staring at the photograph."

It is hardly to be supposed that this young cat understood the matter as we, with our life-long training and perhaps higher intelligence, are able to do, but that he saw the picture *as* his young master. The boy he loved had vanished from his sight, and lo! there he was, strangely diminished in size, motionless and voiceless, stuck up against the wall.

I believe the chief interest to readers of the article in the August number of this magazine was in the case of telepathy described. I then said that it was the first case I had encountered of telepathy between a human being and a cat; that other cases I had met with concerned the dog, and one between horse and man related by M. A. Lower in one of his Sussex books. I have now to thank one of my correspondents for informing me of a second authentic case in Everard A. Calthrop's book, "The Horse as Friend and Companion," an extremely interesting work to everyone who knows and loves the horse, and a valuable one to every student of animal psychology. In this place I can only deal with cases between man and cat.

It is a somewhat delicate subject, and I am obliged to dismiss from consideration all those cases in which the facts may be accounted for without the aid of this mysterious faculty of the mind.

And here I must explain the reasons for not having given the names and addresses of my correspondents. In some instances I have been asked not to publish these, and, not to make distinctions, I think it best to publish none, but to keep the whole of the letters for future reference and to supply an address to anyone who may want it.

One case sent me closely resembles the one I gave in the first article, of Bishop Barry's wife and her cat. In this instance the cat was left in a locked-up house in Buxton after arrangements had been made with the lady next door to go in and feed the cat every day. The cat was a great favourite and would have been taken by its mistress but for the fact that it was about to become a mother. A fortnight later the mistress, staying at Bordon, had a distressing dream in which she saw her cat drowning, fighting for its life and unable to climb out of the water, while she struggled in vain to rescue it, but was unable to reach it with her hand. On her return she found her cat well and happy, nursing a single kitten, but on relating her dream to her neighbour she was told that that very thing had happened on the night of her dream. The cat had her kittens under the grid of the cellar, which was flooded by a heavy downpour of rain one night. The lady next door on waking at midnight heard its cries, and jumping up and hastily dressing, she went in the house and found the cat plunging about in the water with all her kittens in a half-drowned condition. She succeeded in reaching the cat and pulling her out, and after more trouble she managed to save one of the kittens.

Most of the undoubted cases of telepathy we meet with are of this kind—the message is from one in extreme peril and terror, or in the agonies of death, to one it loves and looks to for protection; and the phenomenon appears to be precisely the same between man and man and man and animal. Other examples of this kind I have received relate to the dog, and have a close resemblance to the familiar one recorded by Rider Haggard.

MY last case of undoubted telepathy is the best, but as it comes into the life histories of two or three cats, all of it peculiarly interesting, I must give the whole story in full. My correspondent writes from North London, where she now resides, but the history begins in the house in the country, her former home. First of the three is Pinnie, received as a present in its kittenhood, who grew up to be a great favourite. She was, unhappily, of an excessively nervous disposition, and had an ineradicable terror of strangers and workmen in the house. She would take refuge from them in a disused chimney. In due time Pinnie became a mother, and then many times afterwards. One of her first litter, named Warder, was preserved, and became her life-companion. Warder was not a nervous cat, but was taught by Pinnie from childhood to fly to the refuge in the chimney when workmen came into the house. Pinnie could practise deception on occasions. Once there was a particularly handsome kitten in a litter, and she appeared not to like the amount of attention paid to it. One day she was seen jumping through the scullery window with this kitten in her mouth, and by and by she came back without it. What had she done with it? The whole house was excited over the question, and a great search for the lost little beauty was started, Pinnie herself going about with the searchers, but without exhibiting any signs of anxiety. At length someone heard a feeble mewing from the coal cellar, and there the kitten was discovered, packed in some dry straw, which the cat had taken there to make it a bed. It was at once taken back to its basket and placed with the others, but quickly disappeared again, and was again found in the cellar. And there they had to leave it.

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Pinnie had lived several years and had brought many kittens into the world before she came to her end. The great adventure, the removal to London, was about to take place, and it was decided that Pinnie could not be taken on account of her extreme nervousness. The change to that thunderous world swarming with strangers would be too terrible for her. Nor could she be left to the care of others. The only way was to put her to sleep.

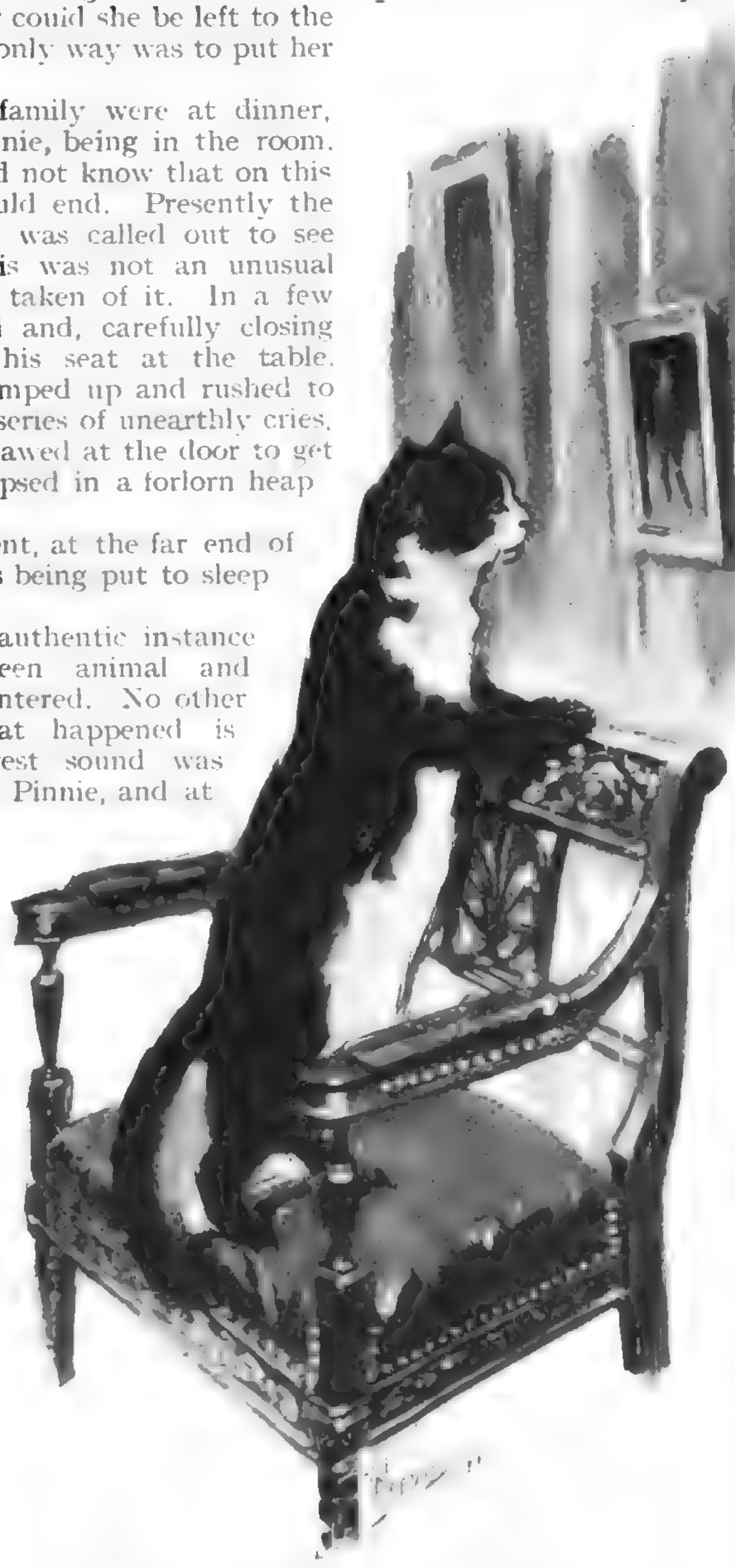
One evening the family were at dinner, Warder, but not Pinnie, being in the room. My correspondent did not know that on this day Pinnie's life would end. Presently the master of the house was called out to see someone, and as this was not an unusual thing no notice was taken of it. In a few minutes he returned and, carefully closing the door, resumed his seat at the table. Suddenly Warder jumped up and rushed to the door, uttering a series of unearthly cries, and then furiously clawed at the door to get out, and finally collapsed in a forlorn heap on the floor.

At this very moment, at the far end of the house, Pinnie was being put to sleep by the vet.

This is the first authentic instance of telepathy between animal and animal I have encountered. No other explanation of what happened is possible. No faintest sound was uttered by the dying Pinnie, and at that distance no cry could have been heard in the closed dining-room. Such cases may be extremely common in wild animal life, for all we know to the contrary, but it is only in domestic animals and in a rare concurrence of favourable circumstances that such a phenomenon can be observed.

It only remains to add a few facts concerning Warder's subsequent history. Warder is looked on as a very important cat, for he is still living, aged fifteen years, and, my correspondent adds, "rules the house." He cannot open doors himself but makes others open them for him by rattling the locks. He had, after losing Pinnie, one great friend, Tipperary, a stray which he brought into the house and delighted to honour. Every day they were fed together, but each had a separate plate, and invariably after eating part of the food they changed plates, and from the time that Tipperary disappeared, after four years' companionship, Warder has left a portion of his food on his plate at every meal. That, however, does not say that he has a distinct recollection of his lost friend every time he eats. No doubt he remembered him for days and weeks after his disappearance until leaving something for him on his own plate became a settled habit.

One incident in Tipperary's career is worth recording as an example of the powerful effect of association. He was eating his supper one evening, gnawing a rabbit bone, when the Silvertown explosion took place. He jumped into the air, then rushed out of the room. From that time the sight or smell of rabbit on his plate would send him at a run out of the room. To eat rabbit, according to his idea, would cause another Silvertown explosion.



"My father would often say, 'Where is your little master?' and, jumping upon a chair, the cat would begin staring at the photograph."

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THE SINISTER QUEST OF NORMAN GREYES

by

E·PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

No 3. "THE MENWOOD ROAD BANK ROBBERY"

Sir Norman Greyes, the chief figure in this thrilling series of detective stories, having resigned his high position at Scotland Yard, makes a practice of studying the criminal world from the outsider's point of view.

By MICHAEL SAYERS.

IT had taken months to collect all the necessary information and make the preliminary arrangements, but the moment had arrived at last. At twenty minutes to twelve on a Friday morning I descended from a rather shabby Ford car exactly opposite Bailey's grocery stores at the corner of Menwood Street, in one of the northern suburbs of Leeds. It is a neighbourhood of six-roomed houses and long cobbled streets; a neighbourhood teeming with men and women when the great factories close at hand are empty, but at this particular hour of the day, before the children's schools have finished their morning session, and whilst the men and a considerable portion of the women are still in the mills, showing signs of something approaching desertion. There was a handsome grey touring landaulette containing two passengers, a man and a woman, drawn up on the other side of the way, apparently to take advantage of the shade of some tall advertisement hoardings whilst the chauffeur filled up with petrol. Otherwise, a careful glance up and down the street convinced me that not a soul was in sight.

I walked along a hot asphalt path, and turned the corner into what was known as the Boulevard almost unnoticed. On my left was a stretch of waste ground, black and stinking with refuse, empty tins, and bottles, abandoned even by the children as an undesirable playground. On my right were more houses in course of erection, deserted to-day by reason of an opportune strike amongst the masons. The only inhabited edifice was the one where my business lay. A brass plate upon the door indicated that this was a branch of Brown's Bank, planted out here in this uncomely spot for the convenience of the huge factories which dominated the neighbourhood.

With my hand upon the swing-door I glanced around. My luck was certainly in, for there was still not even a child to be seen. Inside, behind the counter, both the manager and his clerk were busy counting out bundles of Treasury notes. They looked up inquiringly as I entered. Strangers in such a place, I imagine, were rare. Such a stranger as I was a rarity which they were never likely to experience again in this world.

My plans were cut and dried to the last detail. I wasted no time in any silly attempt to hold the place up, but, brief though the seconds were, it was amazing how my brain chronicled a host of varying impressions. I saw the bland smile fade from the manager's lips, I saw the dawn of suspicion in his eyes, the gleam of terror followed by the spasm of pain as I shot him through the right shoulder-blade. His assistant had not the courage of a rabbit. White-faced, gasping for mercy, he stood there with his hands above his head and his knees shaking.

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I am convinced that if I had left him alone for another five seconds he would have collapsed hopelessly without any interference on my part. I was not able to take risks, however, so, leaning over, I struck him on the point of the jaw. He fell in a crumpled heap behind the counter. I then helped myself to seven thousand pounds odd in bank and Treasury notes, and in about a minute and a half after I had entered the bank I strolled back again the way I had come.

At the corner of the street I looked back. There were no signs of life about the bank, no one apparently on his way towards it. There were a few children playing about the unoccupied houses, and behind the windows of the cottages in the street where I now was were women intent upon various domestic duties. One woman was scolding her child just outside the door. She glanced at me only in the most perfunctory fashion. My panama hat was pulled well over my head, a reasonable precaution with the sun at its greatest power. A man was bending over the open bonnet of the Ford car which I had left at the corner. I passed him by without a glance and stepped into the grey touring-car behind. The engine was purring gently, the chauffeur's fingers were upon the gear-handle as I appeared. I took my place by the side of Janet, unrecognizable beneath her motor-veil, and we glided off northwards. There were no signs of any disturbance as we shot into the broad main street. We gathered speed up the Chapeltown Hill, and very soon we were racing for Scotland.

JANET handed me a silver flask soon after we had passed out of the suburbs. I shook my head.

"You know that I never take anything until one o'clock," I reminded her. "Why should I drink in the middle of the morning?"

I fancied that I caught through her veil a gleam of that almost worshipping fidelity which had led me to trust this woman as I had trusted no other in my life.

"What a nerve!" she murmured.

"I have no nerves," I rejoined, "neither have I any fear. By this time you ought to realize it."

"All went smoothly?" she asked.

"Absolutely according to programme. A chance customer would have been the only possible disturbance, and the position of the bank rendered that unlikely."

"What happened?"

"I shot the manager through the shoulder-blade," I told her. "The heart would probably have been safer, but the blinds of the bank were all drawn to keep out the sun, and my panama was as good as a mask. His clerk was almost dead from fear before I touched him. I had not to waste a bullet there."

"And how much?" she inquired.

"Only just over seven thousand pounds," I admitted. "It seems a pitiful amount for so much planning and risk. Still, something had to be done."

We were up on a stretch of moorland now, well away from curious eyes. Janet and I were busy for some ten minutes, making three parcels of my stock of notes. Then she looked at the map.

"Arthington should be the next village," she remarked.

I nodded. We descended a steep hill. Half-way up the next we came upon a small motor-car, drawn up by the side of the road, the bonnet thrown open, its owner seated in the dust. The latter rose to his feet as we approached. I handed him the black bag which I had been carrying, in which was my panama hat and one of the packets of notes. He raised his cap nonchalantly.

"According to plan?" he asked.

"According to plan," I replied.

We sped on for another twenty miles, when almost a similar occurrence happened. A man seated by the side of his motor-bicycle rose to his feet as we approached. I handed him the second packet.

"All well?" he inquired.

"Perfectly," I assured him.

We were off again in less than ten seconds. Our third stop was at the top of a hill forty miles farther north, after we had partaken of a picnic luncheon in the car. A man was seated motionless in a large touring car, headed in our direction. He held out his arm as we approached, and glanced at his watch.

"Wonderful!" he murmured. "You are three minutes to the good."

I handed him the third packet. He waved his hand and started up his engine. Soon we left him, a speck behind us. I leaned back and lit a cigarette.

"I have now," I remarked, "only one anxiety."

"And that?" Janet inquired, quickly.

"About the greens at Kinbrae," I confided. "I met a man last year who told me that they were apt to get dried up."

She smiled.

"We had plenty of rain last month," she reminded me. "I thought you were going to speak of our friend."

I shook my head.

"Norman Greyes is in Norway," I told her. "I am not sure," I went on, after a moment's hesitation, "whether I do not sometimes regret it."

"Why?"

"Norman Greyes has made life inconvenient for us for several years," I said.

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"One of our best men has had to devote the whole of his time to watching him. We have been obliged to stay away from places which I very much wanted to visit. He has that absurd gift—he always had—of being able to connect a particular undertaking with a particular person. For that reason we have had to remain idle until we are practically paupers. When we have paid the expenses of this *coup*, and paid the staff, there will be barely enough left to keep us until Christmas. If we could get rid of Norman Greyes, we could seek wider fields."

"Why not?" she asked, indifferently. "He is only a man like the others."

I pretended to be deep in thought. As a matter of fact, I was studying Janet. No creature or servant in this world could render such faithful service as she has rendered me, yet I am one of those persons gifted with instincts. I know that she has a strange mind, a strange, tumultuously passionate nature. I have, so far, been the man of her life. If it were not I, I sometimes wonder whether it might not be Norman Greyes.

WE were to have one tense few minutes before we reached our stopping-place for the night. We had just passed through a small town, and our silent chauffeur was preparing to let out his engine again, when we were confronted by what was, in the circumstances, a very sinister sight. Two men on bicycles, approaching us, dismounted and stood in the middle of the road with outstretched hands. The sun, even in the distance, flashed upon their uniforms. We realized at once that they were policemen. The chauffeur half-turned towards me.

"What shall you do?" Janet demanded.

"Do?" I replied. "Why, the natural thing, of course. All this is provided for. Oliver," I added, leaning forward, "those policemen seem to want to speak to us. Pull up."

We came to a standstill a yard or two away from them. The larger of the two men, who wore the uniform of a sergeant, made a solemn and portentous approach.

"Good afternoon, Sergeant," I said. "I hope that we are not in trouble?"

He looked at me as he might have done at a man whose hands were dripping with the blood of his best friend.

"It's your number-plate, sir," he announced. "They telephoned us through from Ripon to stop your car and call your attention to it."

"What is wrong with my number-plate?" I asked.

"Why, you've been driving where they've watered the roads freely," the sergeant pointed out, "and it's muddied it up entirely. There's no one can read a letter on it."

I felt Janet's fingers clutch mine, and they were as cold as ice. It was not a moment which I myself forgot, less for its significance than for its effect upon my companion. The chauffeur, the police-sergeant, and I solemnly inspected the number-plate, and the former, with a duster from his tool-chest, carefully rubbed it clean.

"That will be all right now, Sergeant?" I inquired.

"That will be quite all right, sir," he admitted, taking off his helmet and wiping the perspiration from his forehead. "It's a warm day, this, for they bicycles."

It was my policy not to overdo the matter, and, indeed, it was not necessary, for the man's eyes glistened as I deposited a couple of half-crowns in his hand.

"I am sorry to have given you this trouble," I said. "We tourists are proverbially thoughtless about our number-plates. I hope you will accept this and have a drink with me."

"We will that, sure, sir," the sergeant promised, saluting first me and then Janet. "Come along, Jock," he added, "we'll pay a little visit to the Widow MacGill on the way back."

So we drove off again northwards. My chauffeur was an elderly man, who has faced all that the world may hold of evil with me many a time, but his driving for the first few miles was erratic. Janet, I could see, although outwardly she had recovered herself, was on the point of hysterics. I settled myself down in my corner, adjusted my horn-rimmed spectacles, and drew from the pocket of the car a new half-crown book on the principles of golf, written by a late beginner. So we travelled until we reached the inn where we stayed for the night, and late on the afternoon of the following day we arrived at our destination. There was just a bare white house, a lodge, the gate of which was held open by a great, raw-boned gillie, miles of what seemed to be interminable moorland, and below, the sea. I looked around with satisfaction.

"You're Sandy MacLane, the caretaker here?" I asked, leaning out of the car.

He made a noise which sounded like "Oo ay!"

"Which way might the golf links be?" I inquired.

He pointed with a long and hairy forefinger.

"The club-house is yonder," he vouchsafed; "a step across the road is the fifteenth tee."

I sighed with content.

"Come up to the house," I ordered. "After tea I shall play a few holes."

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By SIR NORMAN GREYES.

MY friend Rimmington called to see me on the night of my return from Norway. He looked around with an air of dismay at my various travelling paraphernalia.

"So you're really off, then?" he remarked.

"On the contrary, I've just returned," I told him. "It was too late in the season to do any good, and I made a mistake in changing my river. The whole thing was a frost."

Rimmington sighed.

"Well, I'm glad to see you back," he declared, sinking into my easy chair. "All the same, London in August isn't exactly a Paradise!"

"Tell me about Leeds?" I suggested. "To judge from the newspapers, you seem to be having a lot of trouble about a very simple case."

Rimmington frowned. He was silent for several moments and, glancing across at him, I noticed that he was pale and apparently out of sorts.

"I think I'm stale, Greyes," he confessed. "The Chief pretty well hinted the same thing, and worse, when I got back last night. I really dropped round to see whether you could help me."

"If I can, I will with pleasure," I promised him. "You know that."

"You read the bare account of the affair, of course," Rimmington went on. "Two fairly credible witnesses deposed to seeing a man in a grey flannel suit, with a panama hat pushed over his eyes, drive up in a Ford, leave it outside Bailey's grocery stores, walk down the street and turn into the Boulevard where the bank is situated, exactly at the time that the robbery took place. Three women and two children saw him pass up the street two minutes later, and thirty seconds after that he crossed the street and entered Bailey's grocery stores. The man who served him with some marmalade, tea, and bacon saw him climb up into the Ford and drive away. The man was known at the shop as Ralph Roberson. There is no doubt that it was his car. Half an hour after the robbery he was arrested at his house—he was cleaning the car at the time—and although he had changed his clothes, the light grey suit which he had recently worn was discovered in his bedroom, and the panama hat, warm with perspiration, in a cupboard. His excuse for changing his clothes was that he put on older things in which to clean the car, and his account of his morning was that he had driven straight up to Bailey's stores for some groceries, and straight back again. Two witnesses are ready to swear that they saw him get out of the Ford and go towards the bank: the grocer's assistant, who served him, is absolutely certain that he was in the shop within thirty seconds of the Ford pulling up outside, and that when he left he drove straight away."

"What sort of a man is this Roberson?" I asked.

"A man of bad character," was the prompt reply. "He was once a bookmaker, but failed. He has been in prison for obtaining goods by false pretences, and there are half-a-dozen summonses for debt out against him at the present moment. The only little money he earns, nowadays, seems to be by acting as a bookmaker's tout. He knew the neighbourhood well, and has once been heard to remark upon the isolated position of the bank. In every respect he is just the man to have done it, and yet there are all my witnesses swearing to different things. Furthermore, he had scarcely a shilling in his pocket, and he confessed that he was going to try and sell the car that afternoon to raise a little money."

"It seems to me," I admitted, "that you have been a little premature in framing your case against Mr. Ralph Roberson."

"So the magistrates thought," Rimmington rejoined, dryly. "We managed to get two remands. This morning he was discharged."

"If the grocer's assistant is telling the truth," I remarked, "Roberson could not possibly have committed the robbery. What sort of a young man is the assistant?"

"Highly respectable and very intelligent," Rimmington replied. "It would be quite impossible at any time to shake his evidence."

"So much for Mr. Ralph Roberson," I said. "And now who else is there?"

"That's the difficulty," Rimmington confessed. "One doesn't know where to turn. The only other two people who were about the spot at the same moment were a man and his wife touring up to Scotland in a big Daimler car. They stopped to make some purchases at Bailey's stores, but neither of them alighted."

"Any description of the man?" I asked.

"Yes, the grocer's assistant who went out to take the order remembers him. He describes him as a sporting-looking gentleman wearing a brown alpaca dust-coat and a grey Homburg hat. Such a person could not possibly have left the car and walked down the street without notice."

"Any description of the woman?"

Rimmington shook his head.

"To tell you the truth," he confessed, "I didn't ask for one. There were guns, golf clubs, and other luggage on the top of the car. The two were apparently

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motoring up to some place they had hired in Scotland."

ON the face of it, there seemed no possible connection between these tourists and a local bank robbery. Yet the thought of them lingered obstinately in my mind. A man and a woman, a bank robbery, and the fact that I was supposed to be safe in Norway! I began to take up the pieces of the puzzle once more, and fit them in according to my own devices.

"You seem to have done everything possible, Rimmington," I said, at last; "but I think, as my Norway trip has fallen flat, I shall go up to Scotland for a fortnight. Would you like me to call over at Leeds and see if I can pick up anything?"

"Exactly what I hoped you would suggest," he confessed, eagerly. "I have brooded over the affair so long that I can think of nothing but the obvious side. The Chief will give you a letter to the Leeds people. Would you like me to come with you?"

I shook my head.

"Better not," I told him. "Better for me to go as a stranger."

That night I travelled down to Leeds.

There was nothing about the neighbourhood which differed materially from Rimmington's description. I paid a visit to the place at exactly the hour the robbery had been committed, walked from the grocery store to the bank, carefully timing myself, and made some trifling purchases inside the shop. Later in the day I tracked Roberson to ground in his favourite public-house. Choosing my opportunity, I addressed him.

"Are you the man whom the police made such idiots of themselves about in this bank robbery?" I asked.

"What the hell's that to do with you?" he answered.

His tone was truculent, but he obviously only needed humouring.

"Just this much," I replied. "I am a journalist representing one of the picture papers. It would be worth a fiver to you if you would let me do a sketch of you."

His manner changed at once.

"You don't want an interview?"

"Not likely," I assured him, commencing a rough sketch in a notebook which I had put into my pocket for that purpose. "I read the case myself. A fool could see that you had nothing to do with it."

He stopped drinking and looked at me curiously.

"If I were the police," I went on, "I should want to know a little more about the two tourists on their way to Scotland."

"Then you're as big a fool as the police," he retorted, gruffly. "They hadn't nothing to do with it. They were filling up with petrol and neither of them budged from the car."



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"It was a curious moment. I saw the flash of the man's gun, and I saw the woman's hand restrain him, heard the single word whispered in his ear."

I smiled in a superior way and went on sketching. He watched me with thinly-veiled anxiety.

"Toffs they were," he went on, "on their way up for a bit of sport."

"Maybe," I commented. "They didn't seem in any hurry about it."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't see why they stayed at the Queen's two nights," I remarked.

"Who said they did?" he demanded. "They stayed one night, and grumbled at having to do that."

"How do you know?" I asked, looking up at him.

"I spoke to the chauffeur," he replied, sullenly. "He told me my oil was leaking."

I changed the subject, finished my ridiculous sketch, and handed over the five pounds. That night I caught the mail train to Scotland.

IT took me less than a week to discover the whereabouts of the man and the woman who I learned were passing under the name of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Grover. On the morning after my arrival at the very remote corner of Scotland where they had taken up their temporary abode, I committed an indiscretion. I donned a knickerbocker suit and set out for a tramp over the moors. I had just clambered up to the top of a little ridge overlooking the sea, when I came face to face with a little party ascending it from the other side. The little party consisted of the person I had known chiefly as Mr. Stanfield, his wife, a villainous-looking gillie, and two dogs. It was a curious moment, full of the suggestions of tragedy, afterwards ridiculous in its conventionality. I saw the flash of the man's gun, and I saw the woman's hand restrain him, heard the single word whispered in his ear. I raised my cap, he followed suit. His gun hung idly under his arm. My hand was inside my coat-pocket, clutching something hard.

"What an extraordinary meeting!" Janet exclaimed, with a faint smile. "So you sometimes take holiday, also, Sir Norman?"

"Sometimes," I admitted. "I came home unexpectedly from Norway. I was disappointed in my fishing."

"Are you aweer that you're trespassing, mon?" the gillie demanded, severely.

"I'm afraid I didn't know it," I replied. "There were no notices."

"It doesn't matter," Janet intervened. "We happen to be walking up a covey of birds this way."

"I put nothing up," I assured them.

"How long are you staying in these parts, Sir Norman?" Stanfield inquired.

"About a week, if I like the golf," I answered.

"I've taken the Lodge, down there," he pointed out. "Call and see us before you leave."

"Won't you come and dine with us to-night?" Janet invited, with a challenge in her eyes.

I hesitated. The invitation appealed to me in one way as much as it repelled me in

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another. Stanfield watched me as though he were reading my thoughts.

"You need not take salt," he said, grimly.

"I shall be delighted," I assented.

I spent the afternoon wandering about the moor, inspecting the golf links, and speaking on the telephone. Punctually at twenty minutes to eight I presented myself at the sombre-looking house. The summons of a harsh bell was answered by an immaculate butler. Janet, from the other end of the cool, white hall, came forward to meet me. Almost simultaneously the gong rang. The dinner was well cooked, the champagne of an excellent brand, and my host, with a twinkle in his eyes, called my attention to the fact that it was opened in my presence. As soon as the last course was concluded, Janet led the way out on to the flagged terrace. We sat in easy chairs, gazing over a strip of moorland away to the sea.

"You are a brave man, Sir Norman," my hostess said, abruptly.

"Why?" I asked.

"You know—and you alone—that I once killed a man—although you don't altogether know why," she went on, softly. "How do you know that I have not within me the makings of a modern Lucrezia? I have read quite a good deal about poisons—I may be said even to have studied the subject—and you have delivered yourself into my hands."

"Why should you poison me?" I argued. "I will do both you and your husband the credit to believe that you don't bear malice. Revenge is a senseless sentiment. As regards our last conflict, I probably prevented your drawing a matter of a hundred thousand pounds from the insurance company for the pretended loss of your necklace, but that was all in the day's work. I was paid to match my wits against yours, and I did it. There is no one particularly anxious to take proceedings against either of you for that little—error of judgment."

My host leaned forward in his chair. His face was solemn and brooding, his gaze was hard and intent.

"You have things against me dating from before that," he said.

I nodded.

"But I am in the same position as Scotland Yard," I reminded him. "For those things I have no case. For those misdemeanours of which I suspect you in the past, I could at the present moment go only so far as to procure a warrant charging you with feloniously wounding a police inspector. For the rest, I suspect but I have no proof."

"You suspect what?" he asked

I shook my head.

"There are limits to my candour," I protested, mildly. "You must admit that I am not secretive or unduly aloof, inasmuch as I dine at your table, discuss your peccadilloes, and pass on, like an ordinary guest. What I may suspect in the past I keep to myself. I am your enemy, and you know it. If it pays you to attempt to murder me, I imagine you will try."

"Janet would desert me if I did," he declared, with a grim smile. "She finds these little conferences with you so inspiring."

She looked at me with that wonderful smile of hers.

"I do not like to hear you say that we are enemies," she murmured. "I would rather think that we are like the soldiers who fight in two opposing armies. We fight because it is our duty. So we are enemies because it is our duty. Even that does not interfere with personal feelings."

"That is true," I admitted, carelessly. "I could never absolutely dislike a man who played such good golf as your husband."

"And what about me?" she demanded, with some simulated show of peevishness.

"You drive me to be obvious," I replied. "No one could possibly dislike a person who contributed to the beauty of the world."

She laughed softly.

"Why, you are a courtier, Sir Norman," she declared. "Your compliments and the perfume of those roses and the flavour of the Benedictine are getting into my head. I begin to picture you as the serpent who has crawled into this Utopian Paradise."

"Talking about golf," her husband intervened in a harsh tone, "what about a game, Sir Norman? Will you play me to-morrow morning?"

"With pleasure," I assented.

"At ten o'clock?"

"I will be in the club-house," I promised him.

AT five minutes to ten on the following morning I watched Mr. James Stanfield stroll across towards the club-house. I waved my hand and stepped back into the locker-room. Three or four men in tweeds and golfing outfit were waiting there. In five minutes my prospective opponent entered. In five seconds the handcuffs were upon his wrist and one of the three apparent golfers had the matter in hand.

"You are charged," he said, "with feloniously wounding William Harmell, manager, and John Stokes, clerk, of Brown's Bank, in the Menwood Road, Leeds, and with stealing from the premises the sum of seven thousand pounds. I should recommend you to come with us quietly and to reserve for the present anything you may have to say."

Looking at him as he stood leaning a little against his own locker, I could have sworn

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"'If it pays you to attempt to murder me, I imagine you will try.'
'Janet would desert me if I did,' he declared."

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that there was no manner of change in the face or expression of my enemy. He ignored the others and looked across at me.

"This is your doing?" he asked.

"Altogether," I admitted.

"You knew it—last night?"

"It was you who reminded me that I need not take salt," I replied.

"The trick is to you," he confessed. "I am ready, gentlemen."

He walked quietly out to a waiting motor-car, with a burly policeman on either side of him, and a very important man from Scotland Yard in the party. Rimmington and I were left behind, and presently we essayed a round of golf. All the time my eyes kept straying towards the Lodge. No sign, however, came from there.

"I still," Rimmington remarked, as we waited for a few minutes on the tenth tee, "don't quite understand how you tumbled to this affair so quickly."

"It was quite easy when you once admit the possibility of the occupants of the Daimler car being concerned," I replied. "Of course, Roberson was in it up to the eyes. It was Stanfield who drove up in Roberson's Ford and went direct to the bank. The Daimler car was already there, containing Janet Stanfield and Roberson, wearing a grey Homburg hat and a linen duster. The chauffeur brought into the store a small order which the grocer's assistant packed and took out. The chauffeur was taking advantage of the delay to fill up with petrol. The moment Stanfield descended from the Ford and made his way to the bank, Roberson slipped off his linen duster, produced a panama hat which he pulled over his eyes, and made his purchases in the shop. He came out just as Stanfield reappeared, and drove the Ford away. Stanfield just stepped into the Daimler, put on his linen duster and grey Homburg hat, and off they started. The idea was to confuse, and at first it succeeded. The whole affair was ingenious, from the selection of that particular bank, which is wickedly isolated, to the exact location of the Daimler car, which made anyone on the off-side almost invisible."

"It's pretty generous of you to let me take the credit of this," Rimmington remarked

"If Stanfield turns out to be Pugsley, and Pugsley the man I believe him to be," I said, "I shall need no other reward than the joy of having brought him to book."



"'Hands up—like lightning!'

"Do you believe him to be Michael Sayers?" Rimmington asked.

"I am absolutely certain of it," I answered.

We completed our round, lunched and played again. There came no sign from the Lodge. Somehow or other, the silence seemed to me ominous. Towards evening I began to get uneasy. Just as we were sitting down to dinner, I was fetched to the telephone.

"Inspector McCall speaking," the voice I

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"'If you are going to shoot, let's have it over quickly,' I answered."

heard declared. "Are you Sir Norman Greyes?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Have you heard the news?"

"I have heard no particular news since early this morning," I replied.

"Stanfield escaped eleven miles from here," the Inspector declared, gloomily.

"Escaped? Ridiculous!" I exclaimed.

"He did it, anyhow. He shot both his guards with an automatic pistol fixed in the sole of one foot and worked with the toe of the other. Mr. Gorman from Scotland Yard is seriously wounded, and one of the others is shot in the leg. Stanfield then threatened the driver until he released him from the handcuffs and took him to within a mile of a railway station. There he tied the man up, drove the car on himself, and disappeared. So far we have no news."

I could make no intelligible reply. I muttered something to the effect that Rimmington and I would come on to the police-station the first thing in the morning.

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Then I walked outside, a little giddy, sick at heart, furious with myself and Fate. I stood looking towards the Lodge until at last I yielded to an irresistible impulse. I hastened across the few yards of heather-grown common, crossed the road, made my way up the straggling avenue, and rang the great front-door bell. There was a suggestion of emptiness about its rankling echoes, no sound of anyone moving or stirring within. I was indeed on the point of turning away when the great door swung silently open. Janet stood there, looking out at me.

I freely admit that I lost my nerve. I lost my poise, and with it all the gifts which enable a man to face an exceptional situation. For this woman showed no signs of any mental disturbance. I had never seen her look more beautiful. She wore a loose white gown, open at the throat and tied with a girdle at the waist. Her hair shone like burnished copper, her eyes were almost fiercely, yet softly, bright. She moved away from the door.

"Come in," she invited. "I have been expecting you."

She led the way to the terrace, and sank back on to the divan, where, apparently, she had been resting.

"Judas!" she murmured.

"You know, then?." I demanded, harshly.

"Everything—even the last little episode. What fools you policemen are!"

"He isn't safe yet," I muttered.

She laughed mockingly.

"I worry no more about him," she declared. "It is not an equal struggle. I worry only about myself."

"Alone—here!" I echoed, dimly conscious of the fact that I had been aware of it all the time.

She nodded.

"Harding, our butler-chauffeur and confederate, has taken the car—where, you can guess. Our gillie broke his leg this morning and has gone to hospital. I am not afraid of burglars, but I am terrified of mice, and the place is overrun with them. Also, I simply loathe the idea of having to get up and make my own coffee in the morning."

I rose to my feet.

"There are empty rooms at the Dormy House," I told her, "where you could obtain service and be made quite comfortable. I am going back now. Shall I bespeak one for you?"

"You would really have me there," she asked, curiously, "under the same roof as your august and respectable self?"

"Why not?"

"The wife of a famous criminal," she reminded me, "the wife of the man whom you have betrayed! You and I share a secret, too, don't we? Would you vouch for my—respectability?"

I moved a step towards her. Her eyes were filled with a mingled light, a light of allurement and cruelty. Her lips were moist and quivering—was it with anger? A long, bare arm was withdrawn from behind her head. Then a voice fell upon the throbbing silence like a douche of cold water.

"Hands up—like lightning!"

I obeyed. I recognized the voice of the man in Harding's livery. It was Stanfield who had crept in upon us, unheard.

"A mixture of Lothario and Inspector Bucket!" he mocked. "Any prayers to say?"

"If you are going to shoot, let's have it over quickly," I answered.

The woman slipped from the divan and stood between us.

"Don't be absurd," she said to the newcomer. "We couldn't afford to part with Sir Norman. Life would be too dull without him. Put him on parole. He is perfectly trustworthy."

Stanfield lowered his pistol.

"You are right," he admitted. "Take your choice, Greyes—twelve hours' silence or Eternity."

"I will be silent for twelve hours," I promised.

He pointed to the door.

"I cannot have the last few hours I may ever spend with my wife disturbed," he said. "Kindly leave us."

I went without a backward glance. I opened and closed the front door and walked down the straight avenue. In the woods beyond, the owls were hooting. Bats flew through the twilight before me, and a quarter of the yellow moon showed behind the hills. I realized all these things dimly. There was a mist before my eyes, a cloud befogging my brain. For those few moments, Stanfield's escape, the steadiness of his automatic pointed directly at my heart, were vague memories only. I was angry and humiliated. I was filled with a man's hatred of his own weakness.

Rimmington was sitting in the porch smoking when I got back. He moved his head towards the Lodge. It was obvious from his dejection that he, too, had heard from McCall.

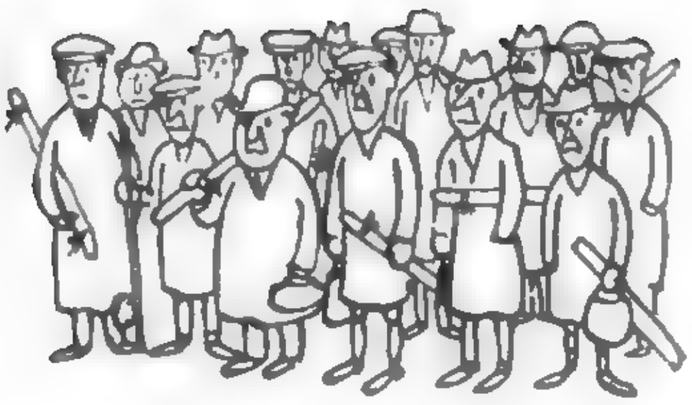
"What do you think about taking a look round there?" he suggested.

I think that, if anything, I went beyond the obligations of my parole.

"Quite useless," I replied, tersely. "Let's have a game of billiards and try to forget the damned business."

(Next month: "The Honour of Monsieur Lutarde.")

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A Corner in Worms

by

WILLIAM CAINE and H·M·BATEMAN

MY old friend Wienershnizel—I should say Wynne, for that is how he prefers nowadays to see his name spelt—is the proprietor of one of the oldest-established and most reputable bucket-shops in Copthall Avenue. There is no shrewder man of business in the City. Never once has Wynne been in jail. I can't tell you how often they have tried to put him there, but he has done them every time. I tell you, he is clever. But it is not with Wynne as a man of business that I am concerned.

He has another side. You will never guess what it is, so I may as well tell you. He is a sportsman to the core of his being. Yes, this astute, rapacious adventurer of the Stock Markets is a sea angler of the most earnest description. Not a Sunday passes from January to December without witnessing the arrival of my dear old Wynne, loaded with his rods, his paternosters, and his bait-cans, upon the point of Brighton, Deal, or some other pier. He is as indefatigable as he is regular; always the first angler to arrive, he is ever the last to depart. You would hardly know Wynne at these times. He is no longer the keen man of business, with an eye open singly to the main chance; he is the sportsman, with a soul aflame for the capture and destruction of dabs, gurnards, and starfish. Business affairs, though in their way splendid enough, are, after all, sordid when compared with the things (whatever they may be) which occupy the thoughts of the sea angler.

That the thoughts of Wynne are not sordid when he is fishing is pretty conclusively proved by the fact that he never catches anything at all except, now and then, the girders of a pier or somebody else's baits. Never yet has he landed a fish. He is either the most unlucky or most incompetent sea angler in Great Britain; that is clear. But what I say is, a man who can go on fishing year after year, winter and summer, rain or shine, storm or calm, freezing or boiling, with never a fin to show for it, cannot—I say he cannot— be actuated by motives of gain. Such a man can be nothing but a sportsman of the very purest ray. It is obvious.

I hope you won't think that I reflect upon his sportsmanship when I tell you that Wynne has nearly all his life cherished the ambition to obtain a prize in an angling tournament. That doesn't dim his lustre for you, I believe. It should, on the contrary, brighten it. If it were a mere suit-case or tantalus that he was after, it might dim him, I admit. But to think that would be to wrong Wynne grievously. He has all the suit-cases and tantaluses he can possibly require. Prizes to a man like Wynne are symbols merely. They are glory in material form. It has been glory—reputation—that Wynne has been after all these years.

He wants to be pointed out in Lothbury as the man who, for example, came out top of thirty thousand at Bexhill, or the man who broke all the records for Pegwell Bay, or the man who landed the biggest known codling at Broadstairs in August, 1914. That's all he wants. Anyone else may have the barometers and the brandy-flasks.

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A Corner in Worms

I repeat, the man is a sportsman through and through.

Now listen to this and then tell me if you think there is anything sordid or material about Wynne—Wynne the angler, I mean, of course.

A few months ago the championships of Goodwin's Bay were about to be held, and Wynne (who belongs to every sea-angling club in South-Eastern England) had entered his name as usual and for every event. Some weeks before the date that had been fixed he had what is at present called a brain-storm. He had just made a hundred and twenty thousand pounds, he and several associates having engineered a highly successful corner in calico. His thoughts were naturally attuned to the engineering of corners. And so, while he was furbishing up his tackle one evening for the coming contest at Goodwin's Bay, he suddenly slapped his knee and cried: "Eureka!" He didn't know what Eureka means; he only knew that it is the proper exclamation with which to hail the birth of a bright idea.

And what was his bright idea?

Nothing less than to go down to Goodwin's Bay, just before the meeting, and corner lug and rag.

What, pray, is lug? What may rag be?

Lug, my poor friend, is an obscene and hairy worm, about as long as your foot, which lurks in the sand and is dug up and dragged out in hundreds by the longshoremen and sold to sea anglers for bait. Rag is another outrage of the same kind. It differs from lug only in the degree of its obscenity. Lug and rag are odious-looking creatures, but the fishes love them, and the sea anglers swear by them, beyond all other baits. In fact, without a large supply of lug and rag no sea angler will approach the ocean with any kind of confidence. To be without lug or rag is, to the sea angler, almost what to be without cartridges is to the gunner, or to be without beer is to the yachtsman.

Do you grasp the significance of Wynne's project now? I hope so. You see—don't you?—that if he could secure all the available supplies of lug and rag for the day of the championships, he would be in an almost unassailable position. No one else would have a chance against him.

I maintain, therefore, that for a brain-storm Wynne's brain-storm was something like a brain-storm.

He did this thing. He turned over all the bucket-selling to his partner, went down to Goodwin's Bay three clear days before the date of the competition, and got into touch with the entire bait-digging population of the place. When, on the eve of the contest, he rested from his labours, he had contracts in his pocket covering the entire local harvest of lug and rag for the succeeding twenty-four hours. This, I may tell you, cost him a good deal in earnest money; but what were trouble and money to Wynne when his reputation as a sportsman was concerned? Nothing. Nothing whatever.

You are to know that lug and rag can



"He got into touch with the bait-digging population."

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"They begged for worms at any price. In vain."

only be delved out of the sands when the tide is out. You are also to know that the competition was timed to last from 10.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m., when there would be water under the whole length of the pier, and, consequently, over those sands where dwell the worms aforesaid. Of all this Wynne was well aware; indeed, his whole scheme depended on it. He was quite certain of his ground, because these tidal arrangements are not accidental. The officials of Trinity House decide them in consultation with the editor of Whitaker's Almanack and the secretary of the British Sea Anglers' Association. Oh! Wynne knew exactly what he was doing.

Day dawned upon the backs of a hundred and fifty longshoremen howking out the lug and rag from their holes. When the tide flowed and interrupted their labours the number of the worms which were held at Wynne's sole disposal staggers belief and imagination.

Wynne, furnished with a large bag of coin, stood at the foot of the pier; one by one the longshoremen brought him their treasure and poured it out of buckets into the bait-cans with which Wynne had surrounded himself. At last the final lug was delivered up, the ultimate rag exchanged for copper.

Wynne, owner of every sand-worm in Goodwin's Bay, stood, master of the situation, to await the arrival of the sea anglers. Their train was due in at 10.12.

As for the longshoremen, having nothing more to do at the pier, these persons betook themselves to the drinking-houses of Goodwin's Bay.

The 10.12 arrived, the sea anglers precipitated themselves out of the station and ran furiously to the pier, feeling in their pockets for money wherewith to purchase bait. They made no doubt, the unsuspecting wretches, that they would, as always upon this great day of the Goodwin's Bay year, be greeted with the lusty cry, from a hundred and fifty longshore throats, of "Fine lug, gentlemen; good rag, gentlemen. Six a penny. Good lug. Fine rag. Thirdeen fer tuppence."

To their stupefaction there was not a single worm-merchant in sight. Only Wynne, the centre of bait-cans, stood by the turnstiles, hellishly smiling.

The sea anglers halted in a body, questioning with large eyes the meaning of this sinister spectacle. Then suddenly they realized what had happened (for sea anglers have brains, I may tell you), and at once they were again in motion, charging down upon Wynne with shouts of "How much the lug? What price the rag?"

Wynne waved them away and held up his hand for silence. "No price the lug," he said. "The rag is not for sale."

A scream of anguish arose. Poor devils! they knew Wynne's City reputation and they understood that they were up against it. They wasted no time in supplication, but began instantly to bid against one another for the bait.

"I'll give you sixpence a dozen," they shouted. "I'll give a shilling. Two shillings. Half a crown. Five bob."

Now this is where the proof of Wynne's perfect sportsmanship appears. He had

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these men at his mercy. They were crazy for the lug and the rag without which their angling must be a mockery. They were losing their heads all round him, offering shillings for penn'orths, bidding crowns for what had cost him but a copper or two. Yet he held to his purpose. He kept his vision. He stuck to his worms.

After that I imagine that you won't be inclined to think that there was very much sordidness about Wynne—I mean always Wynne the angler.

Presently the sea anglers understood that they were losing their time with Wynne. They began to scatter in search of longshoremen. The longshoremen were already beginning to straggle, refreshed, out of those places into which they had lately vanished. The sea anglers prostrated themselves before those longshoremen and begged for worms at any price. In vain.

Worms in Goodwin's Bay were "off" until the tide should recede. And by that time the competition would have been fought out. Well, I don't want to linger over the sorrows of these poor men, and I don't want unduly to prolong this history. I was, after all, only concerned to show you how sportsmanship can ennoble a man, how it can purge him of all desire for material gain. I suppose Wynne could have made as much as two pounds ten, or perhaps even three pounds profit, if he had listened to the promptings of his mercantile instincts. He bade them be silent. He gave up gold for glory. Well, I say that was a fine thing, finely done. That's all. I only say that.

The pity is that Wynne should have got nothing out of it. He deserved a better fortune. The fact remains that, for all his worms, he never caught a thing all day but a pair of old trousers. Awful old trousers they were, obviously discarded by a longshoreman, and a longshoreman, as is well known, has to be practically arrestable before he discards his trousers.

Yes, that's all that Wynne fished out of the sea, and with only a pair of trousers to show he could qualify for none of the prizes. Whereas (for no other sea angler, naturally, caught so much as a button) if he had managed to secure even a pale-green crab he would have won every prize there was—for the greatest number of fishes, greatest aggregate weight, greatest average, heaviest single fish, and fish in best condition, as well as all the booby prizes for the smallest number, smallest aggregate weight, smallest average, lightest fish, shortest fish, and worst-conditioned fish. But it was not to be.



"Wynne deserved a better fortune."

However, he has the consolation that he acted like a true sportsman. Of that Wynne is not to be robbed. And he is able, at any rate, to be pointed out in Threadneedle Street as the man who cornered worms.

That is, in a way, a distinction.

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"LEANING UP AGAINST THE WALL WAS THE GIRL, WITH A LOOK OF FROZEN HORROR ON HER FACE. FOR ONE SECOND I SAW JIMMY MAINWARING FRAMED IN THE WINDOW—THEN HE BEGAN SHOOTING."

(*See page* 195.)

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THE MAN WHO COULD NOT GET DRUNK

BY

"SAPPER" (H.C.McNEILE)

ILLUSTRATED BY BALLIOL SALMON & W.R.S. STOTT

"YES; she's a beautiful woman. There's no doubt about that. What did you say her name was?"

"I haven't mentioned her name," I returned. "But there's no secret about it. She is Lady Sylvia Clavering."

"Ah! Sylvia. Of course, I remember now."

He drained his glass of brandy and sat back in his chair, while his eyes followed one of the most beautiful women in London as she threaded her way through the tables towards the entrance of the restaurant. An obsequious head-waiter bent almost double as she passed; her exit, as usual, befitted one of the most be-photographed women of Society. And it was not until the doors had swung to behind her and her escort that the man I had been dining with spoke again.

"I guess that little bow she gave as she passed here was yours, not mine," he said, with the suspicion of a smile.

"Presumably," I answered a little curtly. "Unless you happen to know her. I have that privilege."

His smile grew a trifle more pronounced, though his eyes were set and steady. "Know her?" He beckoned to the waiter for more brandy. "No, I can't say I know her. In fact, my sole claim to acquaintanceship is that I carried her for three miles in the dark one night, slung over my shoulder like a sack of potatoes. But I don't know her."

"You did what?" I cried, staring at him in amazement.

"Sounds a bit over the odds, I admit." He was carefully cutting the end off his cigar. "Nevertheless it stands."

Now when any man states that he has carried a woman for three miles, whether it be in the dark or not, and has followed up such an introduction so indifferently that the woman fails even to recognize him afterwards, there would seem to be the promise of a story. But when the woman is one of the Lady Sylvia Claverings of this world, and the man is of the type of my dinner companion, the promise resolves itself into a certainty.

Merton was one of those indefinable characters who defy placing. You felt that if you landed in Yokohama, and he was with you you would instinctively rely on him for information as to the best thing to do and the best way to do it. There seemed to be no part of the globe, from the South Sea Islands going westward, to Alaska, with which he was not as well acquainted as the ordinary man is with his native village. At the time I did not know him well. The dinner was only our third meeting, and during the meal we confined ourselves to the business which had been the original cause of our running across one another at all. But even in that short time I had realized that Billy Merton was a white man. And not only was he straight, but he was essentially a useful person to have at one's side in a tight corner.

"Are you disposed to elaborate your somewhat amazing statement?" I asked, after a pause.

For a moment or two he hesitated, and his eyes became thoughtful.

"I don't suppose there's any reason why I shouldn't," he answered, slowly. "It's ancient history now—ten years or so."

"That was just about the time she was married," I remarked.

He nodded. "She was on her honeymoon when it happened. Well, if you want to hear the yarn, come round to my club."

"Why, certainly," I said, beckoning for the bill. "Let's get on at once; I'm curious."

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"Do you know Africa at all?" he asked me, as we pulled our chairs up to the fire. We had the room almost to ourselves; a gentle snoring from the other fireplace betokened the only other occupant.

"Egypt," I answered. "Parts of South Africa. The usual thing: nothing out of the ordinary."

He nodded. "It was up the West Coast that it happened," he began, after his pipe was going to his satisfaction. "And though I've been in many God-forsaken spots in my life, I've never yet struck anything to compare with that place. Nwambi it was called—just a few shacks stretching in from the sea along a straggling, dusty street—one so-called shop and a bar. It called itself an hotel, but Lord help the person who tried to put up there. It was a bar pure and simple, though no one could call the liquor that. Lukewarm gin, some vile substitute for whisky, the usual short drinks, and some local poisons formed the stock; I ought to know—I was the bar-tender.

"For about three miles inland there stretched a belt of stinking swamp—one vast malaria hot-bed—and over this belt the straggling street meandered towards the low foot-hills beyond. At times it almost lost itself: but if you didn't give up hope, or expire from the stench, and cast about you'd generally find it again leading you on to where you felt you might get a breath of God's fresh air in the hills. As a matter of fact you didn't; the utmost one can say is that it wasn't quite so appalling as in the swamp itself. Mosquitoes! Heavens! they had to be seen to be believed.



"His eyes followed one of the most beautiful women in London as she threaded her way through

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I've watched 'em there literally like a grey cloud."

Merton smiled reminiscently.

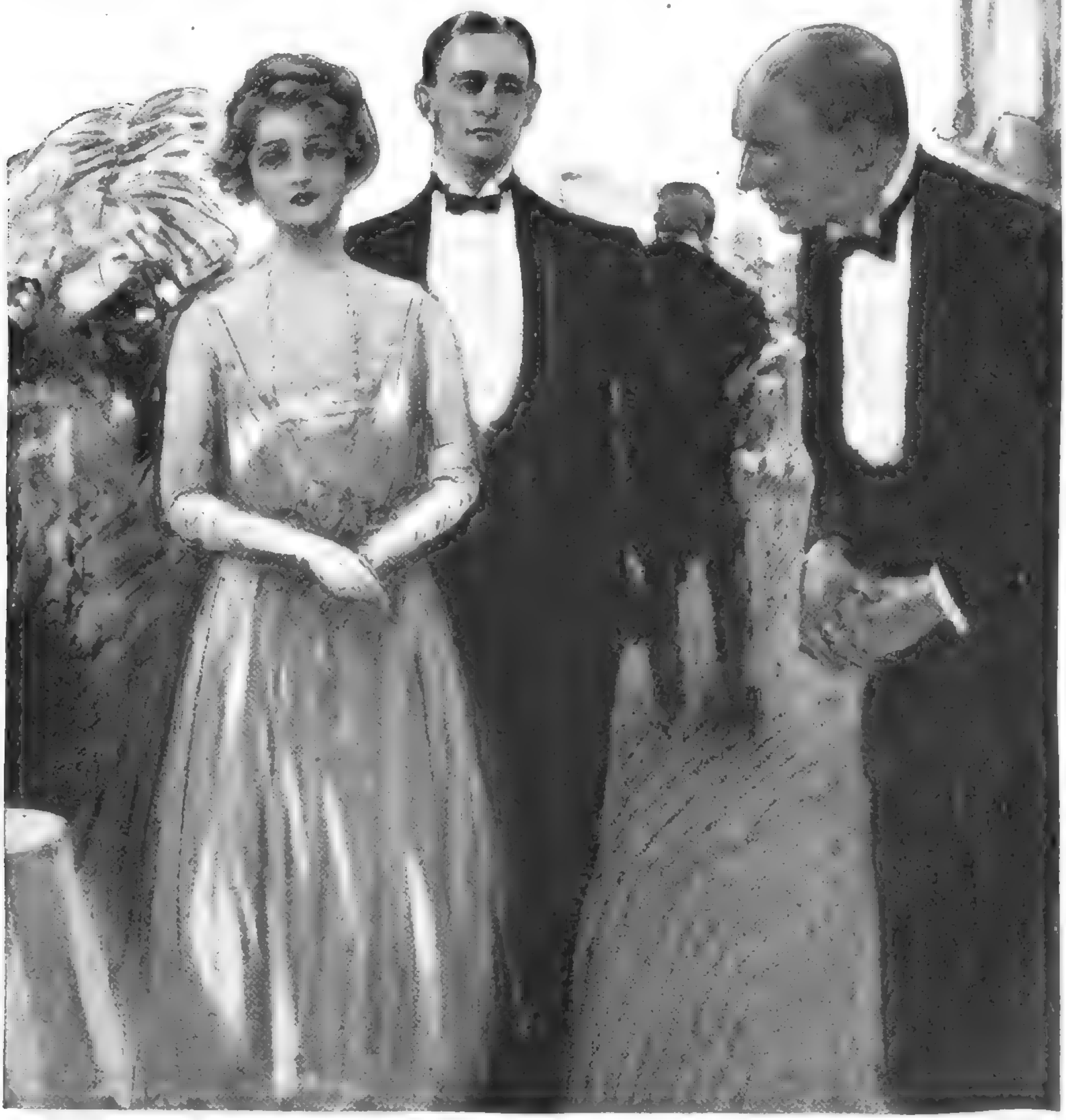
"That—and the eternal boom of the sea on the bar half a mile out, made up Nwambi. How any white man ever got through alive if he had to stop there any length of time is beyond me; to be accurate, very few did. It was a grave, that place, and only the down-and-outers went there. At the time I was one myself.

"The sole reason for its existence at all was that the water alongside the quay was deep enough for good-sized boats to come in, and most of the native produce from the district inland found its way down to Nwambi for shipment. Once over the belt of swamp and a few miles into the hills the climate was much better, and half-a-dozen traders in a biggish way had bungalows there. They were Dagos most of them—it wasn't a British part of the West Coast—and I frankly admit that my love for the Dago has never been very great. But there was one Scotchman, McAndrew, amongst them—and he was the first fellow who came into the bar after I'd taken over the job. He was down for the night about some question of freight.

"'You're new,' he remarked, leaning against the counter. 'What's happened to the other fellow? Is he dead?'

"'Probably,' I returned. 'What do you want?'

"'Gin—double tot. What's your name?'



the tables. Her exit, as usual, befitted one of the most be-photographed women of Society."

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"I told him, and he pondered the matter while he finished his drink.

"'Well,' he said at length, 'I warned your predecessor, and I'll warn you. Don't fall foul of my manager down here. Name of Mainwaring—I do *not* think. Don't give him advice about keeping off the drink, or he'll kill you. He's killing himself, but that's his business. I'm tough—you look tough, but he's got us beat to a frazzle. And take cover if he ever gets mixed up with any of the Dagos—the place isn't healthy.'

"It was just at that moment that the door swung open and a tall, lean fellow lounged in. He'd got an eyeglass screwed into one eye, and a pair of perfectly-fitting polo boots with some immaculate white breeches encased his legs. His shirt was silk, his sun-helmet spotless; in fact, he looked like the typical English dude of fiction.

"'My manager, Mainwaring,' said McAndrew, by way of introduction.

"Mainwaring stared at me for a moment or two—then he shrugged his shoulders.

"'You look sane; however, if you come here you can't be. Double gin—and one for yourself.'

"He spoke with a faint, almost affected drawl, and as I poured out the drinks I watched him covertly. When he first came in I had thought him a young man; now I wasn't so sure. It was his eyes that made one wonder as to his age—they were so utterly tired. If he was indeed drinking himself to death, there were no traces of it as yet on his face, and his hand as he lifted his glass was perfectly steady. But those eyes of his—I can see them now. The cynical bitterness, the concentrated weariness of all Hell was in them. And it's not good for any man to look like that; certainly not a man of thirty-five, as I afterwards discovered his age to be."

MERTON paused and sipped his whisky-and-soda, while from the other side of the room came indications that the sleeper still slept.

"I never found out what his real name was," he continued, thoughtfully. "Incidentally, it doesn't much matter. We knew him as Mainwaring, and the J. which preceded it in his signature was assumed to stand for James or Jimmy. Anyway, he answered to it, which was the main point. As far as I know, he never received a letter and he never read a paper, and I guess I got to know him better than anyone else in that accursed hole. Every morning, punctual to the second at eleven o'clock, he'd stroll into the bar and have three double-gins. Sometimes he'd talk in his faint, rather pleasant drawl; more often he'd sit silently at one of the rickety tables, staring out to sea, with his long legs stretched out in front of him. But whichever he did—whatever morning it was—you could always see your face in his boots.

"I remember once, after I'd been there about a month, I started to pull his leg about those boots of his.

"'Take the devil of a long time cleaning them in the morning, don't you, Jimmy?' I said, as he lounged up to the bar for his third gin.

"'Yes,' he answered, leaning over the counter so that his face was close to mine. 'Got anything further to say about my appearance?'

"'Jimmy,' I replied, 'your appearance doesn't signify one continental damn to me. But as the only two regular British *habitués* of this first-class American bar, don't let's quarrel.'

"He grinned—a sort of slow, lazy grin.

"'Think not?' he said. 'Might amuse one. However, perhaps you're right.'

"And so it went on—one sweltering day after another, until one could have gone mad with the hideous boredom of it. I used to stand behind the bar there sometimes and curse weakly and foolishly like a child, but I never heard Mainwaring do it. What happened during those steamy nights in the privacy of his own room, when he—like the rest of us—was fighting for sleep, is another matter. During the day he never varied. Cold, cynical, immaculate, he seemed a being apart—above our little worries and utterly contemptuous of them. Maybe he was right—maybe the thing that had downed him was too big for foolish cursing. Knowing what I do now, a good many things are clear which one didn't realize at the time.

"Only once, I think, did I ever get in the slightest degree intimate with him. It was latish one evening, and the bar was empty save for us two. I'd been railing against the fate that had landed me penniless in such an accursed spot, and after a while he chipped in, in his lazy drawl:—

"'Would a thousand be any good to you?'

"I looked at him speechless. 'A thousand pounds?' I stammered.

"'Yes; I think I can raise that for you.' He was staring in front of him as he spoke. 'And yet I don't know. I've got more or less used to you and you'll have to stop a bit longer. Then we'll see about it.'

"'But, good heavens! man,' I almost shouted, 'do you mean to say that you stop here when you can lay your hand on a thousand pounds?'

"'It appears so, doesn't it?' He rose and stalked over to the bar. 'It doesn't much matter where you stop, Merton, when you can't be in the one place where you'd

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sell your hopes of Heaven to be. And it's best, perhaps, to choose a place where the end will come quickly.'

"With that he turned on his heel, and I watched him with a sort of dazed amazement as he sauntered down the dusty road, white in the tropical moon, towards his own shack. A thousand pounds! The thought of it rang in my head all through the night. A thousand pounds! A fortune! And because, out in death-spots like that, men are apt to think strange thoughts—thoughts that look ugly by the light of day—I found myself wondering how long he could last at the rate he was going. Two—sometimes three—bottles of gin a day: it couldn't be long. And then—who knew? It would be quick, the break-up; all the quicker because there was not a trace of it now. And perhaps when it came he'd remember about that thousand. Or I could remind him."

Merton laughed grimly.

"Yes, we're pretty average swine, even the best of us, when we're up against it, and I lay no claims to be a plaster saint. But Fate had decreed that Jimmy Mainwaring was to find the end which he craved for quicker than he had anticipated. Moreover—and that's what I've always been glad about—it had decreed that he was to find it before drink had rotted that iron constitution of his; while his boots still shone and his silk shirts remained spotless. It had decreed that he was to find it in the way of all others that he would have chosen, had such a wild improbability ever suggested itself. Which is going ahead a bit fast with the yarn—but no matter.

"IT was after I'd been there about three months that the incident happened which was destined to be the indirect cause of his death. I told you, didn't I, that there were several Dago traders who lived up in the foothills, and on the night in question three of them had come down to Nwambi on business of some sort—amongst them one Pedro Salvas, who was as unpleasant a specimen of humanity as I have ever met. A crafty, orange-skinned brute, who indulged, according to common knowledge, in every known form of vice, and a good many unknown ones too. The three of them were sitting at a table near the door when Mainwaring lounged in—and McAndrew's words came back to me. The Dagos had been drinking; Jimmy looked in his most uncompromising mood. He paused at the door, and stared at each of them in turn through his eyeglass; then he turned his back on them and came over to me.

"I glanced over his shoulder at the three men, and realized there was trouble coming. They'd been whispering and muttering together the whole evening, though at the time I had paid no attention. But now Pedro Salvas, with an ugly flush on his ugly face, had risen and was coming towards the bar.

"'If one so utterly unworthy as I,' he snarled, 'may venture to speak to the so very exclusive Englishman, I would suggest that he does not throw pictures of his lady-loves about the streets.'

"He was holding something in his hand, and Jimmy swung round like a panther. His hand went to his breast pocket; then I saw what the Dago was holding out. It was the miniature of a girl. And after that I didn't see much more; I didn't even have time to take cover. It seemed to me that the lightning movement of Jimmy's left hand as he grabbed the miniature, and the terrific upper-cut with his right, were simultaneous. Anyway, the next second he was putting the picture back in his breast pocket, and the Dago, snarling like a mad dog, was picking himself out of a medley of broken bottles. That was phase one. Phase two was equally rapid, and left me blinking. There was the crack of a revolver, and at the same moment a knife stuck out quivering in the wall behind my head. Then there was a silence, and I collected my scattered wits.

"The revolver, still smoking, was in Jimmy's hand: Salvas, his right arm dripping with blood, was standing by the door, while his two pals were crouching behind the table, looking for all the world like wild beasts waiting to spring.

"'Next time,' said Jimmy, 'I shoot to kill.'

"And he meant it. He was a bit white round the nostrils, which is a darned dangerous sign in a man, especially if he's got a gun and you're looking down the business end of it. And no one knew it better than those three Dagos. They went on snarling, but not one of them moved an eyelid.

"'Put your knives on that table, you scum,' ordered Jimmy.

"The other two obeyed, and he laughed contemptuously.

"'Now clear out. You pollute the air.'

"For a moment or two they hesitated: then Salvas, with a prodigious effort, regained his self-control.

"'You are brave, Señor Mainwaring, when you have a revolver and we are unarmed,' he said, with a sneer.

"In two strides Jimmy was at the table where the knives were lying. He picked one up, threw me his gun, and pointed to the other knife.

"'I'll fight you now, Salvas,' he answered, quietly. 'Knife to knife, and to a finish.'

"But the Dago wasn't taking any, and

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'pon my soul I hardly blamed him. For if ever a man was mad, Jimmy Mainwaring was mad that night: mad with the madness that knows no fear and is absolutely blind to consequences.

"'I do not brawl in bars with drunken Englishmen,' remarked Salvas, turning on his heel.

"A magnificent utterance, but ill-advised with Jimmy as he was. He gave a short laugh and took a running kick, and Don Pedro Salvas disappeared abruptly into the night. And the other two followed with celerity.

"'You'll be getting into trouble, old man,' I said, as he came back to the bar, 'if you start that sort of game with the Dagos.'

"'The bigger the trouble the more I'll like it,' he answered, shortly. 'Give me another drink. Don't you understand yet, Merton, that I'm beyond caring?'

"And thinking it over since, I've come to the conclusion that he spoke the literal truth. It's a phrase often used, and very rarely meant; in his case it was the plain, unvarnished truth. Rightly or wrongly he had got into such a condition that he cared not one fig whether he lived or died; if anything, he preferred the latter. And falling foul of the Dago colony was a better way than most of obtaining his preference.

"Of course, the episode that night had shown me one thing: it was a woman who was at the bottom of it all. I didn't ask any questions; he wasn't a man who took kindly to cross-examination. But I realized pretty forcibly that if the mere handling of her picture by a Dago had produced such a result, the matter must be serious. Who she was I hadn't any idea, or what was the trouble between them—and, as I say, I didn't ask.

"And then one day a few weeks later I got the answer to the first question. Someone left a month-old *Tatler* in the bar, and I was glancing through it when Mainwaring came in. I reached up for the gin bottle to give him his usual drink, and when I turned round to hand it to him he was staring at one of the pictures with the look of a dead man on his face. I can see him now with his knuckles gleaming white through the sunburn of his hands, and his great powerful chest showing under his shirt. He stood like that maybe for five minutes—motionless; then, without a word, he swung round and left the bar. And I picked up the paper."

Merton paused and drained his glass.

"Lady Sylvia's wedding?" I asked, unnecessarily, and he nodded.

"So the first part of the riddle was solved," he continued, quietly. "And when two days passed by without a sign of Mainwaring, I began to be afraid that he had solved his own riddle in his own way. But he hadn't; he came into the bar at ten o'clock at night, and leaned up against the counter in his usual way.

"'What have you been doing with yourself?' I said, lightly.

"'I've been trying to get drunk,' he answered slowly, letting one of his hands fall on my arm with a grip like steel. 'And, dear God! I can't.'

"It doesn't sound much—told like this in the smoking-room of a London club. But though I've seen and heard many things in my life that have impressed me—horrible, dreadful things that I shall never forget—the moment of all others that is most indelibly stamped on my brain is that moment when, leaning across the bar, I looked into the depths of the soul of the man who called himself Jimmy Mainwaring—the man who could not get drunk."

ONCE again he paused, and this time I did not interrupt him. He was back in that steaming night, with the smell of stale spirits in his nostrils and the sight of strange things in his eyes. And I felt that I, too, could visualize that tall, immaculate Englishman leaning against the counter—the man who was beyond caring.

"But I must get on with it," continued Merton, after a while. "The club will be filling up soon, and I've only got the finish to tell you now. And by one of those extraordinary coincidences which happen far more frequently in life than people will allow, the finish proved a worthy one.

"It was about two days later. I was in the bar polishing the glasses when the door swung open and two men came in. They were obviously English, and both of them were dressed as if they were going to a garden-party.

"'Thank heavens! Tommy, here's a bar, at any rate,' said one of them. 'I say, barman, what have you got?'

"Well, I had a bit of a liver, and I disliked being called barman.

"'Several bottles of poison,' I answered, 'and the hell of a temper.'

"The second one laughed, and after a moment or two the other joined in.

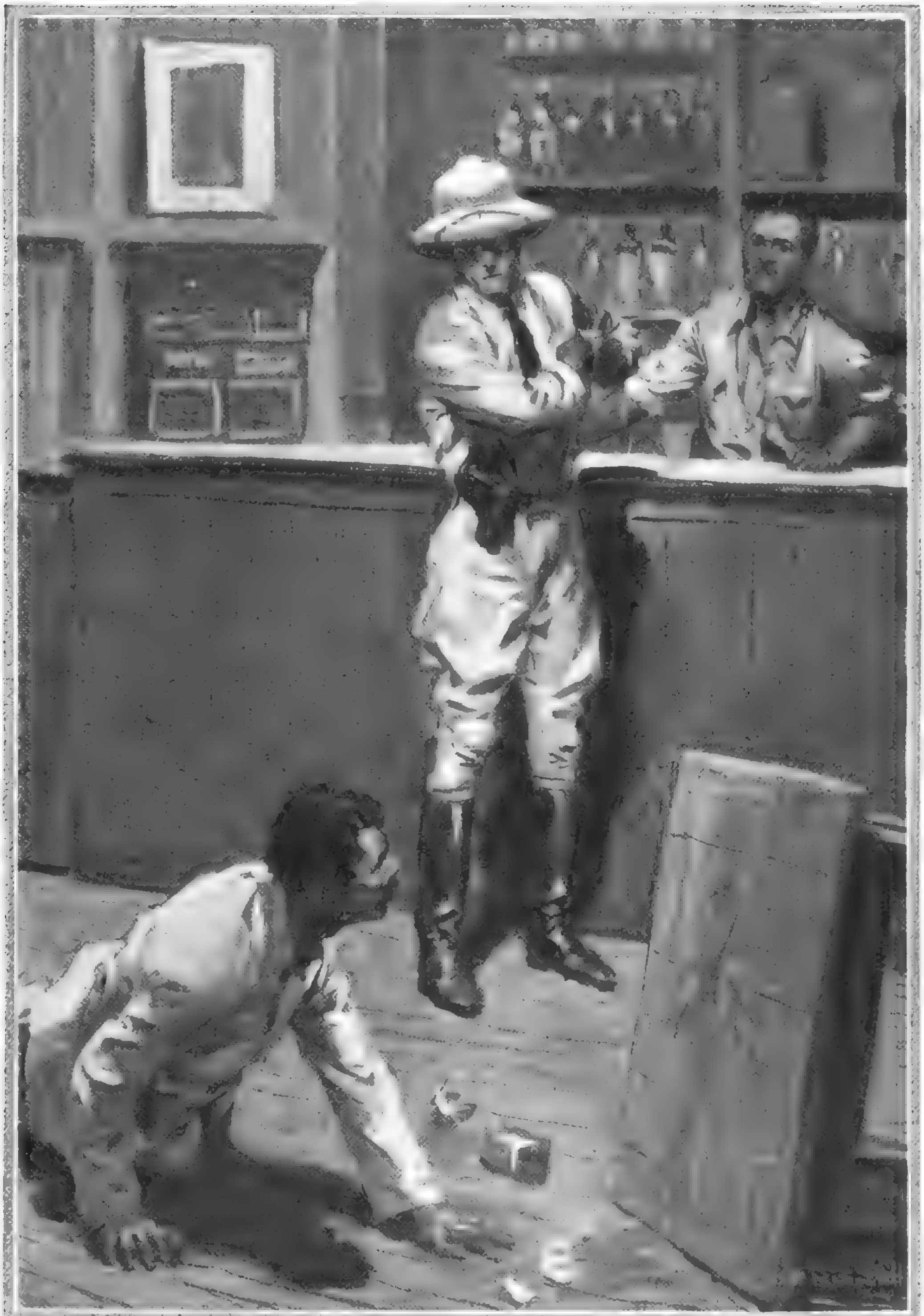
"'I don't wonder at the latter commodity,' he said. 'This is a ghastly hole.'

"'I wouldn't deny it,' I answered. 'What, if I may ask, has brought you here?'

"'Oh, we've had a small breakdown, and the skipper came in here to repair it. We've just come ashore to have a look round.'

"I glanced through the window, and noticed for the first time that a steam yacht was lying off the shore. She was a real

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"The next second Jimmy was putting the picture back in his breast pocket, and the Dago was picking himself out of a medley of broken bottles."

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beauty—looked about a thousand tons—and I gave a sigh of envy.

"'You're not in want of a barman, by any chance, are you?' I said. 'If so, I'll swim out and chance the sharks.'

"'Fraid we've got everything in that line,' he answered. 'But select the least deadly of your poisons, and join us.'

"And it was as I was pulling down the gin and vermouth that Jimmy Mainwaring came into the bar. He got about half-way across the floor, and then he stopped dead in his tracks. And I guess during the next two seconds you could have heard a pin drop.

"'So this is where you've hidden yourself,' said the smaller of the two men—the one who had done most of the talking. 'I don't think we'll trouble you for those drinks, barman.'

"Without another word he walked out of the place—and after a moment or two the other man started to follow him. He hesitated as he got abreast of Jimmy, and then for the first time Mainwaring spoke:—

"'Is she here?'

"'Yes,' answered the other. 'On board the yacht. There's a whole party of us.'

"And with that he stepped into the street and joined his pal. With a perfectly inscrutable look on his face Jimmy watched them as they walked through the glaring sun and got into the small motor-boat that was waiting alongside the quay. Then he came up to the bar.

"'An artistic touch, doubtless, on the part of Fate,' he remarked, quietly. 'But a little unnecessary.'

"And I guess I metaphorically took off my hat to him at that moment. What he'd done, why he was there, I neither knew nor cared; all that mattered to me was the way he took that last rotten twist of the surgeon's knife. Not by the quiver of an eyelid would you have known that anything unusual had happened: he drank his three double-gins at exactly the same rate as every other morning. And then he too swung out of the bar, and went back to his office in McAndrew's warehouse, leaving me to lie down on my bed and sweat under the mosquito curtains, while I wondered at the inscrutable working out of things. Was it blind, the Fate that moved the pieces; or was there some definite pattern beyond our ken? At the moment it seemed pretty blind and senseless; later on—well, you'll be able to form your own opinion.

"YOU know how quickly darkness falls in those latitudes. And it was just before sunset that I saw a boat shoot away from the side of the yacht and come full speed for the shore. I remember I wondered casually who was the mug who would leave a comfortable yacht for Nwambi, especially after the report of it that must have been given by our two morning visitors. And then it struck me that, whoever it might be, he was evidently in the deuce of a hurry. Almost before the boat came alongside a man sprang out and scrambled up the steps. Then at a rapid double he came sprinting towards me as I stood at the door of the bar. It was the smaller of the two men who had been ashore that morning, and something was evidently very much amiss.

"'Where is she?' he shouted, as soon as he came within earshot. 'Where's my wife, you damned scoundrel?'

"Seeing that he was quite beside himself with worry and alarm, I let the remark go by.

"'Steady!' I said, as he came gasping up to me. 'I haven't got your wife; I haven't even seen her.'

"'It's that cursed card-sharper!' he cried. 'By God! I'll shoot him like a dog, if he's tried any monkey-tricks!'

"'Dry up, and pull yourself together,' I said, angrily. 'If you're alluding to Jimmy Mainwaring——'

"And at that moment Jimmy himself stepped out of his office and strolled across the road.

"'You swine, you cursed card-cheat—where's Sylvia?'

"'What the devil are you talking about?' said Jimmy, and his voice was tense.

"'She came ashore this afternoon, saying she would return in an hour,' said the other man. 'I didn't know it at the time, Mr.—er—Mainwaring, I believe you call yourself. The boat came back for her, and she was not there. That was four hours ago. Where is she?'

"He was covering Jimmy with his revolver as he spoke.

"'Four hours ago, Clavering! Good heavens! man—put down your gun. This isn't a time for amateur theatricals.' He brushed past him as if he was non-existent and came up to me. 'Did you see Lady Clavering?'

"'Not a trace,' I answered, and the same fear was in both of us.

"'Did she say what she was coming on shore for?' He swung round on the husband.

"'To have a look round,' answered Clavering, and his voice had altered. No longer was he the outraged husband; he was a frightened man relying instinctively on a bigger personality than himself.

"'If she's not about here, she must have gone inland,' said Jimmy, staring at me. 'And it'll be dark in five minutes.'

"'My God!' cried Clavering, 'what are we to do? She can't be left alone for the

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night. Lost—in this cursed country! She may have hurt herself—sprained her ankle.'

"For a moment neither of us answered him. Even more than he did we realized the hideous danger of a white woman alone in the bush inland. There were worse dangers than snakes and wild animals to be feared. And it was as we were standing there staring at one another, and afraid to voice our thoughts, that one of McAndrew's native boys came down the street. He was running and out of breath; and the instant he saw Jimmy he rushed up to him and started gabbling in the local patois. He spoke too fast for me to follow him, and Clavering, of course, couldn't understand a word. But we both guessed instinctively what he was talking about—and we both watched Jimmy's face. And as we watched it I heard Clavering catch his breath sharply.

"At last the boy finished, and Jimmy turned and looked at me. On his face was a look of such cold malignant fury that the question which was trembling on my lips died away, and I stared at him speechlessly.

"'The Dagos have got her,' he said, very softly. 'Don Pedro Salvas is, I fear, a foolish man.'

"Clavering gave a sort of hoarse cry, and Jimmy's face softened.

"'Poor devil,' he said. 'Your job is going to be harder than mine. Go back to your yacht—get all your men on shore that you can spare—and if I'm not back in four hours, wait for dawn and then strike inland over the swamp. Find Pedro Salvas's house—and hang him on the highest tree you can find.'

"Without another word he swung on his heel and went up the street at a long, steady lope. Twice Clavering called after him, but he never turned his head or altered his stride—and then he started to follow himself. It was I who stopped him, and he cursed me like a child—almost weeping.

"'Do what he told you,' I said. 'You'd never find your way; you'd be worse than useless. I'll go with him: you get back and bring your men ashore.'

"And with that I followed Jimmy. At times I could see him, a faint white figure in the darkness, as he dodged through that fever-laden swamp; at times I found myself marvelling at the condition of the man, bearing in mind his method of living. Steadily, tirelessly, he forged ahead, and when we came to the foothills I hadn't gained a yard on him.

"And then I began wondering what was going to happen when he reached Salvas's bungalow, and by what strange mischance the girl had met the owner. That it was revenge I was certain; he had recognized her from the picture, and I remember thinking how bitter must have been his hatred of Mainwaring to have induced him to run such an appalling risk. For the risk was appalling, even in that country of strange happenings.

"I don't think that Jimmy troubled his head over any such speculations. In his mind there was room for only one thought—an all-sufficient thought—to get his hands on Pedro Salvas. I don't think he even knew that I was behind him, until after it was over and the curtain was falling on the play. And then he had no time for me."

MERTON gave a short laugh that had in it a touch of sadness.

"A good curtain it was, too," he continued, quietly. "I remember I made a frantic endeavour to overtake him as he raced up to the house, and then, because I just couldn't help myself, I stopped and watched—fascinated. The window of the big living room was open, and the light blazed out. I suppose they had never anticipated pursuit that night. Leaning up against the wall was the girl, with a look of frozen horror on her face, while seated at the table were Pedro Salvas and three of his pals. And they were drinking.

"It all happened very quickly. For one second I saw Jimmy Mainwaring framed in the window—then he began shooting. I don't think I've mentioned that he could shoot the pip out of the ace of diamonds nine times out of ten at twenty yards, and his madness did not interfere with his aim. And that night he was stark, staring mad. I heard three shots—so close together that only an artist could have fired them out of the same revolver and taken aim; I saw the three friends of Pedro Salvas collapse limply in their chairs. And then there was a pause; I think Jimmy wanted to get at *him* with his hands.

"But it was not to be. Just for a moment the owner of the bungalow had been so stupefied at the sudden appearance of the man he hated that he had simply sat still, staring; but only for a moment. The movement of his arm was so quick that I hardly saw it; I only noticed what seemed to be a streak of light which shot across the room. And then I heard Jimmy's revolver again—the tenth, the hundredth of a second too late. He'd drilled Pedro Salvas through the heart all right—I watched the swine crumple and fall with the snarl still on his face—but this time the knife wasn't sticking in the wall.

"She got to him first," went on Merton, thoughtfully. "His knees were sagging just as I got to the window, and she was trying to hold him up in her arms. And then between us we laid him down, and I saw that the end

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was very near. There was nothing I could do; the knife was clean into his chest. The finish of the journey had come to the man who could not get drunk. And so I left them together, while I mounted guard by the window with a gun in each hand. It wasn't a house to take risks in.

"He lived, I think, for five minutes, and of those five minutes I would rather not speak. There are things which a man may tell, and things which he may not. Sufficient be it to say that he may have cheated at cards or he may not—she loved him. If, indeed, he had committed the unforgivable sin amongst gentlemen all the world over, he atoned for it. And she loved him. Let us leave it at that.

"And when it was over, and the strange, bitter spirit of the man who called himself Jimmy Mainwaring had gone out on the unknown road, I touched her on the shoulder. She rose blindly and stumbled out into the darkness at my side. I don't think I spoke a word to her, beyond telling her to take my arm. And after a while she grew heavier and heavier on it, until at last she slipped down—a little unconscious heap of sobbing girlhood."

Merton paused and lit a cigarette with a smile.

"So that is how it was ordained that I should carry the Lady Sylvia Clavering, slung over my shoulder like a sack of potatoes, for three miles. I remember staggering into the village to find myself surrounded by men from the yacht. I handed her over to her distracted husband, and then I rather think I fainted myself. I know I found myself in my own bar, with people pouring whisky down my throat. And after a while they cleared off, leaving Clavering alone with me. He began to stammer out his thanks, and I cut him short.

"'No thanks are due to me,' I said. 'They're due to another man whom you called a card-cheat—but who was a bigger man than either you or I are ever likely to be.'

"'Was?' he said, staring at me.

"'Yes,' I answered. 'He's dead.'

"He stood there silently for a moment or two; then with a queer look on his face he took off his hat.

"'You're right,' he said. 'He was a bigger man than me.'"

MERTON got up and pressed the bell.

"I've never seen him from that day to this," he said, thoughtfully. "I never saw his wife again until to-night. And I've never filled in the gaps in the story. Moreover, I don't know that I want to."

A waiter came over to his chair.

"You'll join me? Two whiskies-and-sodas, please, waiter—large ones."

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 104.

SCHOOL, stage, and life in town its pages show:
The tale appeared some eighty years ago.

1. Your name, here writ, and shortened, now we meet;
   Victor and then three more the line complete.
2. Stranger and exile, yet a faithful friend
   When monarch had with treason to contend.
3. Archbishop, canon, curate, vicar, dean,
   He comes with step sedate and reverend mien.
4. Caroline, surely, and it seems we may
   Feel certain that the lady had some hay.
5. A Scottish tree (if one may use such phrase)
   Recalls a scholar versed in ancient ways.
6. Food rearrange—a story known to fame:
   This by itself reveals the second name.
7. Four little words; less than one word; to read
   The place's name, two letters more we need.
8. 'Tis often yours, and yet not owned by you,
   Since anagram of instrument will do.

PAX.

Answers to Acrostic No. 104 *should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor,* THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.*2, *and must arrive not later than by the first post on March* 10*th.*

Two answers may be sent to every light.
It is essential that solvers, with their answers to this acrostic, should send also their real names and addresses.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 103.

(*The Third of the Series.*)

IN number one time number two is eaten,
And as a vegetable can't be beaten.

1. She did great service in the war.
2. Once water, harder than the floor.
3. In Latin this is one, less one.
4. Gives shelter from the rain or sun.
5. You cannot do this, speaking truth.
6. Colour of cheeks in healthy youth.

KING COLE.

1.	W.	A. A.	C.
2.	I	c	E
3.	N	i h i	L
4.	T	r e	E
5.	E	r	R
6.	R	u d d	Y

NOTE.—Light 3. Also, Nil.

Solvers who write to the Acrostic Editor and desire answers to their queries should, with their letters, enclose a stamped addressed envelope, and he will endeavour to reply.

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"SAPPER" IN MUFTI

by Sidney Dark

TWO generations ago, the most cherished ambition of the professional writer was to be as completely as possible unlike other men in appearance, in habit, and in manner. Long hair and untidy clothes were regarded as the outward and visible signs of intellectuality. In France, particularly, the literary man was always obsessed with the desire to astonish the bourgeois whom he despised. This yearning for eccentricity had its most famous demonstration when Barbey D'Aurevilly led a goose along the boulevard by a broad piece of scarlet ribbon which was tied in a bow round the bird's neck. There is little if any of this vehement struggle to be peculiar in the present generation of English writing men, the majority of whom are entirely indistinguishable from their fellows of the prosperous professional class. Of course, there are exceptions. Mr. Bernard Shaw still wears Jaeger suits. Sir Hall Caine still wears miraculously high collars. Some of the many minor poets of our time still cultivate humorously long hair. But in appearance, anyhow, men like H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett, John Galsworthy, Phillips Oppenheim, John Drinkwater, Hugh Walpole (to quote a few names at hazard) are even as you and I.

Anthony Trollope used to ridicule the idea that a writer must wait for inspiration for his work. He wrote regularly for so many hours a day, just as a lawyer spends so many hours in the Courts or in his office, and more than one contemporary writer has adopted the same plan, notably Mr. Phillips Oppenheim. The majority of successful writers affect the same amusements as other people, and live their lives along the same comfortable conventional lines. The wayfaring man would certainly be foiled in any attempt to pick out successful writers from a crowd of other men if he did not recognize them from their photographs in the illustrated papers.



"SAPPER."
(Major H. C. McNeile)

No man, perhaps, is less like the conventional idea of a writer than Major H. C. McNeile, better known to playgoers and magazine readers by his pen name "Sapper." Major McNeile has been a soldier and looks a soldier. He is now a highly successful writer, but he does not look it a bit. He is tall and lean, with that characteristic British leanness which years ago used to move Mr. George Moore to admiration. He has all the appearance of a man who is keen on keeping himself fit, and is fonder of the open air than of the musty atmosphere of a library. Major McNeile is a good golfer and a rider to hounds. Indeed, he has all the qualities, and, one must in fairness add, most of the prejudices, of the class to which he belongs. He is still quite a young man—only thirty-three—and he looks younger. He possesses a cheerful, exuberant youthfulness. He is entirely without side, and he has an unaffected and openly-expressed enjoyment of the success that has come to him and which he, of course, quite inaccurately ascribes entirely to the most tremendous and delightful luck. It is this almost eerie lack of conceit (for it is difficult for a man who has achieved great and immediate success not

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to be a little puffed up and more than a little pleased with himself) that is "Sapper's" chief charm.

He will tell you what he owes to other men, and he evidently finds it extremely difficult to talk about himself and about his methods of work, or to discuss the reasons that have made his books and his plays so successful. He comes from a Belfast family of Scotch descent, although there is certainly no trace of Ulster dourness about his character. He was educated at Cheltenham, went on to Woolwich, and, after passing out of the "Shop," obtained a commission in the Sappers, in which he was serving at the beginning of the war. He went out to France in '14, and was present at the first battle of Ypres, performing for some time the routine duties of an Engineer officer, at the beginning of the war, perhaps, of greater responsibility than towards its end. When Kitchener's Army began to grow, and scores of new units were formed, "Sapper" was transferred to the infantry, and, finally, he commanded a battalion of the Middlesex Regiment. At the end of the war he resigned his commission after a military service of something over twelve years.

UNTIL he went to France on active service, "Sapper" had practically written nothing. The war brought many literary careers to a tragically untimely end. One could fill pages of this magazine with the names of young men of brilliant talent who had before 1914 acquired literary reputations and whose lives were sacrificed in the great struggle. Other older men have been so affected by the clanging, bewildering events of the last seven years that their inspiration seems to have dried up and their hands seem to have lost their cunning. But "Sapper" is the literary child of the war. Before 1914 he had tried to write. He tells you quite frankly that he had heard there was money in it. But his efforts had not been successful. The most ambitious of these efforts was a play in four acts. He rather liked the play when he had written it, and sent it to a theatrical manager, who pointed out to him that it would be difficult to produce a drama the longest act of which would only take twelve minutes on the stage and the shortest five.

It was sheer boredom, "Sapper" told me, that really made him write seriously. Most men with long war experience will tell you that the hardest thing to endure at the front was not the enemy shells, not the insistent threat of death, not the occasional "going over the top," but the hours and hours of boredom with little or nothing to do in damp, horrible dug-outs in the front line, or in sordid billets behind. When things were doing, life was endurable. It was the long hours of doing nothing that were intolerable, and it was to fill these long weary hours that Major McNeile began to write.

Referring in 1916 to the first battle of Ypres, he says: "Much water has flowed under the bridge since then: there are not many left of that original handful who crossed the water; and yet a second winter finds us in positions practically unchanged. True, the trenches have improved; the bombs are better; the guns more numerous. But the boredom and the mud, the cold and the fright, are just the same."

Major McNeile felt, too, that at last he had something to write about. He had found in the incidents of a great campaign a new view of men. He had discovered the dramatic possibilities of everyday people. He appreciated commonplace humour as he had never appreciated it before, sharing in this respect the birthright of Dickens and Kipling. He had, as I have said, tried to write in the old days of peace, and his difficulty had been to find something to write about. Out in France, he felt that there was so much to write about that for a while he hardly knew how to begin. Then he sat down, night after night, in a billet, with ten other men in the same room, and wrote the stories collected in the volume called "Sergeant Michael Cassidy." He sent his first stories to the *Daily Mail*, and he is full of appreciation of the help and encouragement he received from Mr. Thomas Marlowe, the *Daily Mail's* editor. Mr. Marlowe urged him to go on writing, and personally arranged for the publication of the collected Michael Cassidy stories with Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton. When this series finished, "Sapper" had become almost famous. He was recognized as one of the real war writers, one of the men who understood the spirit of the men at the front, who realized the vivid contrasts of war and of the primitive life of armies, and who could carry some, at least, of the atmosphere of the trenches into the comparatively safe homes of the people here in England. "Sergeant Michael Cassidy" was followed by "Men, Women, and Guns," and "No Man's Land."

"SAPPER'S" sense of drama and his sympathy with the soldier-man is well illustrated in the story called "Private Meyrick—Company Idiot," printed in the volume "Men, Women, and Guns." Before the war, Meyrick had been "something in a warehouse down near Tilbury," a dreamer and an ass. In the army he was a failure and a nuisance. He wanted to be a credit to the company, but he always failed. Then during a short hot fight, his officer believed

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"A Payment On Account."



"A Bit of Orange-Peel."



"Good Hunting, Old Chap!"



A RECENT PORTRAIT OF "SAPPER," WITH SCENES FROM SOME OF THE SPLENDID STORIES HE HAS WRITTEN FOR "THE STRAND MAGAZINE."



"The Real Test."



"A Glass of Whisky."



"The Green Death."

Photo. Stuers & Dodman.

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(quite wrongly) that the telephone to headquarters was broken. The company idiot felt his chance had come. He crawled out of the trench, found two bits of broken wire, held them together tightly in his hand—and died. Hours afterwards his body was found by his comrades.

"How the devil did he get here?" muttered Seymour. "It's one of my men."

"Was he anywhere near you when you kicked the telephone?" asked the other, and his voice was a little hoarse.

"He may have been—I don't know. Why?"

"Look at his right hand." From the tightly-clenched fingers two broken ends of wire stuck out.

"Poor lad." The Major bit his lip. "Poor lad—I wonder. They called him the Company Idiot. Do you think——?"

"I think he came out to find the break in the wire," said the other, quietly. "And in doing so he found the answer to the big riddle."

"I knew he'd make good—I knew it all along. He used to dream of big things—something big for the regiment."

"And he's done a big thing, by Jove," said the signal officer, gruffly, "for it's the motive that counts. And he couldn't know that he'd got the wrong wire."

THE war came to an end. There were no more war stories to be written, no more war experiences to be related, no more war humour to be dug out of the slime and the slush. The distinctive war writer found his occupation gone. I asked "Sapper" if he found that his war stories still sold, and he told me that their sale had come entirely to an end. The reading public is naturally, and quite properly, weary of battlefields, and "Old Bills," and khaki, and the rest of it, and wants to read about something else. "Sapper" was equal to the occasion. He said to himself: "Here am I, one of ten thousand other men who have to find some new outlet for my abilities. The sort of man I must write about now is a man of my own kind." And he invented "Bull-Dog Drummond," an ex-officer, weary of the placidity of civil life, and yearning for a repetition in some different way of the thrills of France and Flanders. The adventures of Bull-Dog Drummond were written as a series of magazine stories, and subsequently, with the help of Sir Gerald du Maurier, "Sapper" built on the stories the play which has been one of the few great successes of the London theatre during the past year.

"Sapper" is really frankly amused by the success of "Bull-Dog Drummond." As I have said, he is no high-brow, and he does not take either himself or his work particularly seriously. He believes that the play-going public, as well as the reading public, loves adventures. It loves a strong hero, but he must not be too gentlemanly. The popularity of "Bull-Dog Drummond" is, according to his creator, due to the fact that he is strong and ugly. When the serious writer has finished a novel or a play, no word of it must be touched, not even a comma must be taken out or put in. "Sapper" has no such literary prejudices. He told me, with great glee, how during the rehearsals of "Bull-Dog Drummond" at Wyndham's Theatre, he and Sir Gerald du Maurier both felt that the last act was all wrong. The day before the production they still felt that, if this last act was played as it had been rehearsed, the whole thing would probably be a failure. So, on the night before the *première*, "Sapper" sat down and re-wrote the last act entirely from the beginning to the end. It took him five hours. The new act was rehearsed on the afternoon of its production, and was largely responsible for the play's success. It was my good fortune to lunch with "Sapper" on the next day, and his boyish glee in the memory of the first-night enthusiasm and in the laudatory Press notices was entirely delightful.

Some weeks afterwards I had a long talk with him at his house at Ascot, which he has since left because he felt too shut in, he said, in that over-wooded aristocratic countryside. He declares that he must have air and wind and big spaces round him if he is to be healthy and happy. He has been wintering in Switzerland, writing another play and more stories. I have said that "Sapper" does not take himself or his work seriously. But this statement requires some qualification. He thinks that he is lucky, he certainly does not regard himself as a great genius, but this does not mean that he does not take infinite pains with his work, that he is not eager to acquire a greater craftsmanship than he at present possesses. One thing is quite certain. Whatever the future may hold for him, whatever successes he may be destined to write, Major McNeile will always remain a typical open-air, wholesome, unaffected, kind-hearted Englishman. For that is the root of the man. His writing is a pleasant accident, pleasant to himeslf, and more than pleasant to his innumerable readers.

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HEART-WHOLE

by

STACY AUMONIER

ILLUSTRATED BY F·GILLETT·R·I·

IT may be said of Isobel Bloom that in her Garden of Eden apples were not sufficient. She demanded nectarines, pomegranates, hot-house grapes, even crystallized fruit in boxes, tied up with pink ribbons. She was that kind of woman, if you know what I mean. You must not infer from this that she was a weak woman, easily captive to the bow and spear of the most highly favoured hunter. It is only that she was discriminating, critical, elusive, paradoxical, ablative, passionate, romance-ridden, film-soaked, shrewd, precocious, and devastating. To some people a wall is a wall, and a glass of water a glass of water; but to Isobel this was not, and never would be, the case. Her beauty had come with too great a rush and too unexpectedly to allow her time to bow acknowledgments to apparent phenomena. She had been a plain child with thin legs, irregular features, and a too small nose. But at the age of eighteen something suddenly seemed to happen. The legs filled out and became extremely graceful. The features balanced themselves. Then you saw that the nose wasn't a bit too small. Nature had been preparing for this all the time. Her father, who was the son of a man who had made a large fortune out of lawn-mowers, said to his wife one evening, just after they had returned from a six months' jaunt in Egypt :—

"Good Lord! Have you noticed Isobel?"

And his wife said :—

"What about her, darling?"

"She's suddenly turned into an extraordinarily beautiful girl."

No harm in this. Fond parents indulge in these infra-familiar platitudes; but Isobel had overheard the remark, and she rushed upstairs to her bedroom and looked in the mirror. From that day onwards a wall no longer became a wall or a glass of water a glass of water to her. To make my meaning clearer, it may be as well to labour this point a little. Everything is relative. When we say that a wall is a wall we have to allow the fact that a wall is something different to everyone. To one man it may be a prison, to another a protection, to a third an eye-sore; to a builder it's a job, to a cat an ecstasy. To one man it will appeal as a commercial proposition; to another as a romantic episode stirring the memory of ancient architecture. Its symmetry will jag the nerves of some, its irregularity offend the senses of another. On the other hand, a dreamer may gaze into a three-walled garden for the best part of his life, and the fact that it has three walls may make no impression on his consciousness at all. Indeed, a wall, like any other material thing, can be lived down, overlooked, or ignored.

Human beings in a highly vitalized state are always unconscious of any matter not immediately concerned with the frenzy which holds them. For instance, a great actor declaiming a soliloquy from "Hamlet" is entirely ignorant of the progress of his internal digestive functioning; neither is his mind the least bit affected by the physical processes going on in the electric light globes in the footlights upon which his eyes may be fixed. Consequently Isobel Bloom, abruptly transcended by the dazzling radiance of her own beauty, and by its obvious effect upon her fellow-creatures, saw things no longer in terms of actuality. She did not become exactly vain. One cannot call vain a magnificent panther posing in the sun, or an apple-tree in full bloom. Besides, her days were far too crowded for vanity. It is only the idle who are vain. Breathless romance began with the first twitter of the

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starlings on her window-sill at dawn, and did not by any means end when she laid her beautiful head on her pillow at night. Indeed, her dreams were a very busy time. They were invariably concerned with daring episodes of knight-errantry. She lived in the Middle Ages with a large Daimler and frocks from Paris. She had so much to give, and what she had was of such value that the utmost risks and sacrifices must be demanded. Moreover, the weather must keep fine for it.

By the time she was twenty she had had seventeen proposals of marriage, including two offers of an elopement with her father's chauffeur. It was this that made her discriminating and critical. Not that she did not admire Jules, the Belgian chauffeur, and consider him a romantic figure, but that, at his second and more urgent appeal for elopement, she had become painfully aware that he had been eating garlic. With her shrewd sense she realized that this discovery might not have been manifest till too late! The curate never made any deep impression. He was of the sporting parson breed, who had founded a boxing club in the village. He actually made his third proposal to her with his left eye discoloured by the effect of a pretty forearm jab from Beal, the blacksmith. She was convinced that he came to her to be mothered. Sir Andrew Abadam was middle-aged and enormously rich. He told her the full story of his life. How he had been to school and to a commercial college. How, when a child, a nurse had left him out in a pram in the rain; so that to this day he was liable to fierce attacks of cramp in the stomach; how he had in the end inherited a sardine-canning factory from an uncle, and what an enormous success he had made of it. How she, Isobel, was the first woman he had ever loved—in quite the way he loved her. Whatever meagre chances of success his courtship might have had were completely destroyed by his abrupt refusal to dive into the artificial lake one chilly September evening to rescue her fan. The implied cruelty of the request to a man subject to attacks of cramp in the stomach never impressed her; neither did his avowed willingness to "buy her ten thousand fans to-morrow" have the slightest effect. He had missed his chance. Her other suitors included a lord, an Austrian pianist, an oil magnate, an under-gardener, two medical students, a bone-setter, and a sanitary engineer. But all these men, although having many noble qualities, still lacked in some essential. And so at the age of twenty-one we find her (see adjectives in opening paragraph) unmarried, a little embittered, and with old age tapping at the door.

YOU may aver that the particular nectarine, hothouse aspect of Isobel would never have developed had it not been that her grandfather had made a fortune out of lawn-mowers, and you are to a certain extent right. A person to whom there is no difference between a thousand pounds and three-halfpence is less liable to appreciate the fact that a door is a door, and a glass of water a glass of water, than the unhappy individual to whom three-halfpence is a solid proposition, and a thousand pounds a fantastic dream. But this is not exactly Isobel's fault. She was an only child. Her father was hypnotized by the discovery of her beauty. He used to peep at her furtively out of the bathroom window, when she was in the garden, and mutter: "Well, I'm hanged!" He then regarded his roly-poly figure in the mirror, twirled his little sandy moustache, and added: "The age of miracles! The age of miracles!" This shows the amazing egoism of man. Mrs. Bloom also regarded her daughter with astonishment, but the revelation only brought her a kind of cosy sense of pleasure. With laboured scrutiny she discovered the basis of all Isobel's perfections in her own mirror. "Nature is wonderful," she thought; but there was no darn miracle about it. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that from the day on which her parents returned from their trip down the Nile (during the course of which Mr. Bloom had lost one hundred and sixty pounds at bridge, and his wife had made two hundred and twenty), they both melted to Isobel. They subsided into a background. They became merely a united fount of adulation and material supplies. In the great scheme of her life they ceased to count, except as the sleepers on the main line count to the Scotch Express. They made no attempt to control, influence, or even annotate the procession of suitors who began to form. As Mr. Bloom very wisely said: "She will do as she likes."

But when her twenty-second birthday approached, and Isobel still remained unmarried and unpledged, Mr. and Mrs. Bloom began to get alarmed, and in halting phrases Mr. Bloom recounted to her the old fable about the woman who went to collect faggots in a wood. When he had finished Isobel pointed out to him that he had a smut on the white slip of his waistcoat, and that the best people said "faggot," not "faggit." She had not been listening to him. Her mind was too occupied with the details of a crisis in her romantic development. She was in love. For the first time she was in love, and with the ill-luck which she was convinced had come to dog her destiny for ever, she was in love with

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two men. The realization had come to her in a flash that morning as she was feeding the peacocks. What was she to do?

Their names were Jeremiah Jermy and Augustus Smallrage, and in order to develop Isobel's story properly, it may be necessary to recount something about these two men. They were great friends, both wealthy, and both young. Jeremiah Jermy was a tall, fair, æsthetic young man. He had been an officer in the Stiffs, but had resigned his commission owing to a difference with the colonel with regard to the right sauce to serve with grey mullet. He was amiable and kind, could imitate the noise of a steam saw or lift, did very clever tricks with string and matches, had a remarkable collection of cigar-bands, and was always Cambridge in the Boat Race. The latter was a startling characteristic, as he was up at Oxford for four years, and had never even visited Cambridge.



Augustus Smallrage, on the other hand, was dark, rather stocky, and essentially a sportsman. He had killed specimens of nearly every living creature except man. (The exception, of course, does not include coloured men or gamekeepers.) He played polo, squash rackets, fives, badminton, billboard, pelota, and beggar-my-neighbour. He was rather a silent man, but as a gymnast he was unique. He would do the grand circle on the bough of an elm tree in Mr. Bloom's park. He would walk the full length of the terrace five times on his hands. Indeed, the attitude of being upside down appeared to be as natural to him as an upright one. One of his favourite methods of courting Isobel was to balance himself on his head on the balustrade of the terrace outside her window. Sometimes in the early morning she would peep out and behold him balanced there with his legs wide apart and his eyes fixed supplicatingly on her window. She was enormously

"The curate actually made his third proposal to her with his left eye discoloured by the effect of a pretty forearm jab from the blacksmith."

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impressed. She liked to persuade herself that he had been there all night, but the thought of the amount of blood that must have rushed to his head disturbed her, and she would lean out of the window and say :—

"Thank you, so much."

Then he would spin round half-a-dozen times, come down, and go in to breakfast. Jeremiah had no accomplishment so moving as that, but he had other endearing qualities. His string and match tricks denoted an intellectuality and imagination in which perhaps Augustus was a trifle lacking. Isobel had wavered between these two for the best part of a year, and that morning she realized that a definite crisis had arisen. She could be happy with either.

We have said that she was disturbed. This is true, but the disturbance was not entirely an unpleasant one. The capacity for loving two men is rare, and it fitted well with her rich and compendious nature. The romantic possibilities were not to be frittered away. And so it came about that one day in June she sent for them both. She chose the Pompeian room in her father's house on Chelsea Embankment for the venue, and she wore a gown of whortleberry crêpe-de-Chine trimmed with a silk trimming the colour of elephant's breath. When they had assembled, she walked majestically to the window and pointed to the river and said :—

'Look! the river flowing towards the open sea!"

"Yes," answered Jeremiah. "That's right—the Thames."

Then she turned, and addressed them in these periods :—

"Augustus, Jeremiah, it's no good pretending. You know and I know. The truth has got to be faced."

They both faced it.

"You have both sworn you love me, and that you wish to marry me. Is that true?"

"It is true," they replied, hoarsely, and went down on their knees.

"Very well, then; are you prepared to venture something for my sake?"

"We are."

"Good! Then I have prepared a test, a simple, painless, interesting test, and I am prepared to stand by the result."

"Ah!"

They looked up at her in a frenzy of anxiety.

"It is simple—very, very simple. You shall make a girdle round the earth, starting from this room to-day. One shall go east, and the other west. I will remain here. Whoever gets back to me first, I will marry. Are you willing?"

"We are."

"Let us, then, draw lots as to who shall go West and who shall go East."

She took two sheets of embossed note-paper, and on one she wrote 'West," and then she folded them up.

"But you haven't written on the other," said Augustus.

"Of course not," said Jeremiah. "If one is West, the other *must* be East."

'Why?" said Augustus, who was white to the lips.

Neither of the others replied to his inept remark, and Isobel placed the two papers in a hat and shook them up. Then she turned to Augustus and said :—

"You shall draw in alphabetical order. Augustus—first."

Augustus snatched the paper and opened it. He appeared stupefied.

"I've drawn a blank," he said.

"That means you go East," replied Isobel.

"Why?"

"Because I have drawn West!" exclaimed Jeremiah, who felt that he was already triumphing over his opponent by a greater show of intelligence. Isobel walked gracefully across the room and seated herself in a chair of ebony and gold.

"I shall remain heart-whole," she said, dramatically. "I shall wait here for you, for the first of you gentlemen who returns. You, Augustus, go East. You understand, you may take any route you like, use any conveyance you like, employ any means you like, but you must make a complete circle round the earth. You, Jeremiah, will go West. The same rules apply to you. My thoughts will be with you both in whatever part of the world you are, and whatever adventures befall you. Now go!"

The two men looked at each other, and shook hands. Then they knelt for the last time before Isobel, and kissed her hand in turn.

WHEN it came to the moment of departure, the advantage which Jeremiah appeared to have gained by his more prehensile grip of the details of the difficult problem Isobel had set them was to an extent negatived by the action of Augustus. It seemed, indeed, as though Augustus wished to show his contempt for purely theoretical adventures and to establish the fact that he, in any case, was a man of action. No sooner had he kissed the tips of Isobel's fingers than he leapt to the window and opened it. Without a moment's hesitation he mounted the sill and slid down the water-pipe, eventually alighting on the top of his car, which was waiting below. Before Jeremiah had smoothed the nap of his silk hat in the hall Augustus was half a mile on his way.

Each man carried away with him the vision of Isobel seated on her black-and-gold throne,

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"Isobel placed the two papers in a hat and shook them up. 'You shall draw in alphabetical order. Augustus—first.'"

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watching through the window for his return. Both were convinced that thus she would remain until that fateful day.

But we must first of all deal with the actions of Jeremiah. When he had brushed his silk hat he stepped slowly and thoughtfully out into the sunshine. He was by no means eager or inspired by the scheme. In the first place, he was an exceptionally bad sailor, and to-morrow perhaps he would be on the broad Atlantic. As if this were not sufficient, he was condemned to cross the Pacific, the Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean, every unfriendly sea that was ever invented. He saw, moreover, that all the advantages would be with Augustus, who was a good sailor and a flying man. He might quite conceivably fly round the earth and be back in about a fortnight. He visualized himself having an extremely uncomfortable and boring time scrambling round the earth, and then on arriving back discovering that Isobel had been on her honeymoon for some weeks. Confound women! Why couldn't they be more sensible and simple? And for Jeremiah there was another little fly in the ointment. During the previous week he had met a girl in a tobacconist's shop. Of course, she was nothing like Isobel, not so beautiful or bewitching, but still—there she was, and for some mysterious reason she haunted Jeremiah. She was a lovable, simple little thing named Mary Cash. She was in any case—coupled with the thought of unfriendly seas—sufficient to make Jeremiah hesitate as he stood outside Isobel's house and blinked up at the sun. He was about to amble off in the direction of Sloane Square, when he heard his name called. For a few moments he could not determine whence the call came, and then, looking up, he beheld Isobel leaning out of the window. She beckoned to him to return.

"Um!" thought Jeremiah. "She is doing this to delay me. She favours Augustus."

He rang the bell, and what might have proved the determining five minutes in the great race was frittered away in the usual formalities of entering the house and returning to the Pompeian room. When at length he found himself alone with Isobel he was conscious that a change had come over her. She held out her hands and said :—

"Jerry, I have changed my mind. Directly Augustus disappeared down the water-pipe I realized that it was you I loved."

Jeremiah gasped.

"But the race! The race round the earth!"

"Do not go, Jerry. I do not wish you to go. Let Augustus go by himself, and before he returns we shall be married."

Jeremiah stared at her, and stared out of the window. His mind for the fraction of a second fluttered to the girl in the tobacconist's shop, but in the actual presence of Isobel no other woman's memory could remain very vivid. He looked down at his boots, and muttered :—

"Don't you think perhaps it seems just a teeny-weeny bit unfair?"

"All's fair in love and war!" exclaimed Isobel, and then, after a pause, added: "Besides, we can always say you got back first."

Jeremiah could not see how this made it any less unfair, but the ways of women are strange. He pictured Augustus already, perhaps, half way to Hendon to pick up a Handley-Page. He thought of him dashing round the earth, perhaps getting killed or dying from fever in some remote land. Perhaps, after terrible privations, returning to England and finding that the other two had been married all the time. It did seem a little cruel, cruel and unnecessary. Why not send him a wire?—"Race off Isobel favours me." But, on the other hand, where was Augustus? It did not at all follow he had gone to Hendon or even to Paris. He might try and get on the Trans-Siberian Railway. Augustus was capable of anything. His meditations on this theme were interrupted by Isobel, who threw her arms round his neck and said :—

"Don't you understand? It is you I love, Jerry?"

That put the semicolon on his fears and apprehensions; he took her in his arms and behaved exactly as though he had won the race round the earth.

"We will wait," said Isobel, when she could get her breath, "till Augustus has got to Africa or China, or wherever it is he passes through, and then we will get married quietly in Paris."

"Yes," answered Jeremiah. "That would be a nice, quiet, inconspicuous spot."

NEITHER of them had any idea as to how long it would take to get round the earth, and at length Jeremiah called at Cook's in Piccadilly and made inquiries. He found that with luck and by taking express trains and specials, and perhaps flying a bit, Augustus might accomplish it in five weeks, but it would more probably be seven or eight. The conspirators decided to get married in three weeks' time, and to return to Chelsea at the end of the fifth week, and Jeremiah was to pretend that he had just arrived. Through a private detective agency Jeremiah, feeling rather sheepish and guilty, tried to find out which way Augustus had gone, but from the moment his car had vanished round the corner of Tite Street

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they could find no trace of him at all, beyond the fact that he had called at his bankers, and obtained a letter of credit for a large sum.

This is almost a propaganda story. In any case, it has a deep and far-reaching moral, demonstrating the fact that villainy always reacts on itself, that treachery never goes unpunished, and that in the end goodness and honour are worth while, and that beauty has no call to hold itself superior to homely virtues. The plot hatched in that diabolical manner by Isobel, and supported half-heartedly by Jeremiah, was doomed from its very inception.

They got married secretly at a notary's office in St. Malo and went to Dinard for their honeymoon. The marriage was a hopeless failure. The trouble began because Jeremiah was always thinking about the girl in the tobacconist's shop. Isobel, on the other hand, got thoroughly bored with Jeremiah and with his interminable string and match tricks. On the second evening he had exhausted his repertoire of tricks and began all over again. Neither did the imitations of a steam saw or a lift rouse her spirits after the tenth repetition.

"Good gracious!" she thought. "All through life I am condemned to listen to that wretched saw and lift and to watch the twiddlings of those ridiculous pieces of string."

And Jeremiah on his part, when watching Isobel powder her nose, thought :—

"I wonder how Mary Cash is. How simple and sweet she looked when she handed me down that box of Golden Dawn navy-cut."

And he sighed. Neither of them mentioned Augustus, and yet he occupied their thoughts in very divergent ways. They had been at Dinard a week, and they were sitting one evening outside a *café*, listening to the band. They had not spoken for an hour. At last Jeremiah took out a box of matches and began to break off the ends. With an impatient gesture Isobel swept the box off the table.

"No," she said. "Not again. I can't stand it."

Jeremiah picked up the broken matches (matches are very expensive in France) and put them back in his pocket.

"You are right," he said. 'I realize that you don't love me any more, Isobel."

She leant across the table and pressed his hand.

"It is more than that," she answered. "I realize that I never have loved you. I was wrong. It is Augustus I love. It came to me in a flash this morning when you were shaving. I'm not angry with you, Jerry; it's not your fault. You have good qualities —your imitation of the saw is amazing— but, as a man, you do not come up to my ideal."

"No," he replied, hoarsely. "It is best, then, that we part."

Wealth and influence can accomplish many things. Even the law can be jostled and jogged by the fortunate individual with the deep purse. Their divorce was rushed through at breathless speed. Isobel had her reasons for this.

On the last day of the fifth week Isobel was once again seated in the Pompeian room on Chelsea Embankment, awaiting the return of Augustus. As for Jeremiah, within a month of his release he had married the girl from the tobacconist's shop, and they went out to the Hampstead Garden Suburb, and were never heard of again.

BUT to return to Isobel . . . . there she waited. To her annoyance, Augustus did not appear. She went to bed at last, but left a purple shaded lamp burning and the window open. (She knew Augustus would come that way.) Also she set an old family retainer to watch, with instructions to call her immediately the head of Augustus appeared above the sill. But the night passed, and the following day, and the next night, and the whole week, two weeks, three weeks.

Twelve weeks had passed since Augustus set out to circumnavigate the earth, and on the last night of the twelfth week, Isobel looked up at the star-lit sky and said to herself: "This is a wash-out. He has been drowned or killed. To-morrow I shall go back to pa and ma, and then I shall take the veil. Yes, I shall go into a nunnery in some vine-clad corner of Italy, away from the cruel world. Perhaps I had better wait till after Henley, and perhaps Newmarket, but go I assuredly will."

She sighed and thought of a new arrangement of a frock that would be just suitable for the river. She was about to put out the light and retire, when suddenly she heard her name called. She glanced at the window. It was he.

Augustus clambered through and went down upon his knees.

"I am too late," he said.

Isobel sank back in her chair and closed her eyes. The moment was too exquisite to hurry. Her cavalier! The Middle Ages became a back number. She muttered, soulfully :—

"Augustus!"

She then realized that he was wet through, and that his clothes were all in rags. He looked at her sheepishly and repeated :—

"I am too late! Alas!"

Then she said in her deep, quiet voice :—

"No. You are the first."

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"Augustus clambered through and went down upon his knees."

"What!" almost yelled Augustus.

"You are the first. Jeremiah has not yet returned."

"I am the first! I am the first! Jeremiah has not yet returned!" Augustus appeared to be beside himself, but he made no attempt to advance towards her. He continued to kneel there, looking incredibly nonplussed. Poor fellow! She must try to help him. His privations had probably affected his brain, never the sturdiest portion of his anatomy.

"You are wet, Augustus."

"Yes. I was shipwrecked."

"How awful! And you came straight to me without changing your clothes!"

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"Yes, but too late! Even then—too late!"

"No, you don't seem to understand, Augustus. Jeremiah has not returned. I have been waiting here for you—heart-whole!"

Augustus shook himself like a dog, and the water splashed all over the beautiful Pompeian carpet. At last he said :—



"I am too late,' he said. Isobel sank back in her chair and closed her eyes."

"No. I cannot take advantage of my oldest friend. Perhaps he—perhaps he missed his train somewhere. I have been too lucky. Everything went right—trains, steamers, buses, aeroplanes, everything. No, I cannot do it, Chrystabel."

"My name is Isobel. Have you forgotten, Augustus? Tell me the story of your wanderings. Come, kneel beside me."

"No, I am too wet, too—unworthy. I was shipwrecked, nearly eaten by sharks, lost in a jungle in Africa, captured by brigands. It has been awful, but it was quicker than I expected. Poor old Jerry! Poor old Jerry! Where is he? My greatest friend. And perhaps through me we have sent him to destruction."

"All's fair in love and war," murmured Isobel, aptly.

"Oh, no, no, it isn't. Neither in love nor in war. There's a limit. Certain things aren't done, don't you know."

"It was a fair race. I don't understand you, Augustus. Did we not all agree? Come, you are distraught. Let me get you a change of clothes from the butler, and then warm yourself at the fire, and have a hot meal. The race is to the swift, the battle to the strong."

"But he could have got round the earth in a rowing boat in three months."

Isobel came down from her throne and held out her arms.

"*You* might have, Augustus, dear. You are strong. It is strength I love. Come."

"No, no, I'm not strong. I'm as weak as the deuce. I'm unworthy of you. I'm a worm. I'm—I'm—off!"

And before Isobel had had time to anticipate his action he had leapt to the

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window and was sliding down the water-pipe.

"Home!" he yelled to the chauffeur.

The drive to Kensington Gardens only occupied ten minutes. Augustus let himself in and ran upstairs. He opened a bedroom door. A pretty, fair-haired woman was sitting up in bed, reading an illustrated paper. For the sake of the propriety of this journal, let me hasten to add that she was his wife.

"Gee! what's up?" she exclaimed. "You look scared!"

"He hadn't got back!"

"What! You mean to say that the other guy hadn't got round the world in three months?"

"No. Phew! It was an experience! I had the greatest difficulty to get away. She swallowed it all about the shipwreck and the brigands."

The girl in the bed doubled up with laughter.

"I know what it was. I guess the other feller didn't remain heart-whole either."

All of which requires a certain amount of explanation.

IT is necessary to go back to the first departure of Augustus. To describe it briefly it is only necessary to say that he left the house in Chelsea in such a fever of anxiety to race round the earth that he did not devote sufficient thought to the essential details of the competition. He found that there was a big liner leaving for New York that night, and he caught it by the skin of his teeth. He had been three days at sea before he realized that *he was going round the world the wrong way!* It probably all came about through their giving him a blank, instead of a paper on which it was definitely stated that he had to go East.

The realization staggered him. It was too late. There was no means of leaving the ship. They would not reach New York for a week. Assuming he caught a boat back at once, this would give Jeremiah a fortnight's start. Augustus was desolate, and one evening he confessed the whole story to Maisie Denver, the daughter of an American dentist. Her sympathy and homely charm were an enormous help to him. In two days' time he began to look at her, and then he realized that she indeed was the woman of his destiny. She set him no difficult problem to do. She just loved him quietly and effectively. She was certainly very impressed by some of his feats, but she did not demand them of him. For instance, when he stood on his head on the deck rail, she clapped her hands, and exclaimed to her father:—

"My! Can you beat it?"

As her father was a portly old gentleman in the early 'sixties, you must understand that the remark was not issued as a challenge, but only as a term of approbation. They got married in New York, and Augustus was bewildered with happiness. At the same time the affair of the competition worried him. Jeremiah was his greatest friend. One had to play the game. Some things aren't done, don't you know. It was Maisie's suggestion that was ultimately adopted—a harmless compromise. To return too late, when the other fellow had had plenty of time to get round the earth twice. It was also her idea about the shipwreck and the brigands. Women are thorough. No wonder she laughed in bed.

And so to-day you find both Jeremiah and Augustus happily married, and a long life of usefulness and entertainment stretched out before them.

BUT what of Isobel? Alas! She is now rapidly approaching her twenty-fourth year, and remains a lonely woman. Thus do we see how our evil actions come back on us. She had bought all her outfit for the nunnery, but decided eventually to wait another season—or two. She was last seen lunching at the Carlton with a bishop. The bishop was drinking port, and Isobel was helping herself to a nectarine. Our aunt, who was seated at the next table, and has astonishingly good hearing, said that there was nothing Biblical about the remarks that the bishop was making to her. She had cherry-brandy with her coffee, and was wearing a frock that no "really nice woman" would wish to wear in the daytime, nor even in the evening. And so, oh! sisters of Isobel, beware! Nemesis lurks in the stones of these exotic fruits. We all have our Garden of Eden. Let me implore you, as you wander thither—be content with the homely apple, lest in due course you find yourself in similar case to that of Isobel Bloom.

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A NEW SHERLOCK HOLMES STORY

THE PROBLEM OF THOR BRIDGE

by

A. CONAN DOYLE

ILLUSTRATED BY A. GILBERT ROI

SYNOPSIS OF THE FIRST PART OF THE STORY.

The three leading figures in this Adventure are Neil Gibson, a famous gold-mining magnate, his wife, and their children's young governess, the attractive Miss Dunbar. The wife was found in the grounds of Thor Place, nearly half a mile from the house, late at night, clad in her dinner dress, with a revolver bullet through her brain. No weapon was found near her. There was no trace of a struggle, but in her left hand was clutched a note reading: "I will be at Thor Bridge at nine o'clock.—G. Dunbar." Later, the police discovered on the floor of the wardrobe in the governess's room a revolver with one discharged chamber and a calibre which corresponded with the bullet. Miss Dunbar, when arrested, could prove no alibi—on the contrary, she admitted she was near Thor Bridge, the scene of the tragedy, about the time of Mrs. Gibson's death. She also admitted writing the note, but would say no more.

Gibson urges Sherlock Holmes to spare neither trouble nor expense to clear Miss Dunbar. "It's very black against her," he admits. "I can't deny that. . . . And there is no doubt that my wife was bitterly jealous."

The revolver is found to belong to Gibson, but there is no evidence that he had been out of doors since his return from town at five o'clock. Miss Dunbar, on the other hand, admitted making the appointment with Mrs. Gibson.

On viewing the scene of the tragedy, Sherlock Holmes's careful examination of the bridge reveals a small and apparently recently-made chip on the parapet. "It took some violence to do that," said Holmes, thoughtfully. "It was a hard knock. In a curious place, too. It was not from above but from below, for you see that it is on the lower edge of the parapet."

As the following instalment shows, this apparently insignificant chip in the stone was really the clue to the solution of the mystery.

WE were compelled to spend the night at Winchester, as the formalities had not yet been completed, but next morning, in the company of Mr. Joyce Cummings, the rising barrister who was entrusted with the defence, we were allowed to see the young lady in her cell. I had expected from all that we had heard to see a beautiful woman, but I can never forget the effect which Miss Dunbar produced upon me. It was no wonder that even the masterful millionaire had found in her something more powerful than himself—something which could control and guide him. One felt, too, as one looked at that strong, clear-cut, and yet sensitive face, that even should she be capable of some impetuous deed, none the less there was an innate

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nobility of character which would make her influence always for the good. She was a brunette, tall, with a noble figure and commanding presence, but her dark eyes had in them the appealing, helpless expression of the hunted creature who feels the nets around it, but can see no way out from the toils. Now, as she realized the presence and the help of my famous friend, there came a touch of colour in her wan cheeks and a light of hope began to glimmer in the glance which she turned upon us.

"Perhaps Mr. Neil Gibson has told you something of what occurred between us?" she asked, in a low, agitated voice.

"Yes," Holmes answered; "you need not pain yourself by entering into that part of the story. After seeing you, I am prepared to accept Mr. Gibson's statement both as to the influence which you had over him and as to the innocence of your relations with him. But why was the whole situation not brought out in court?"

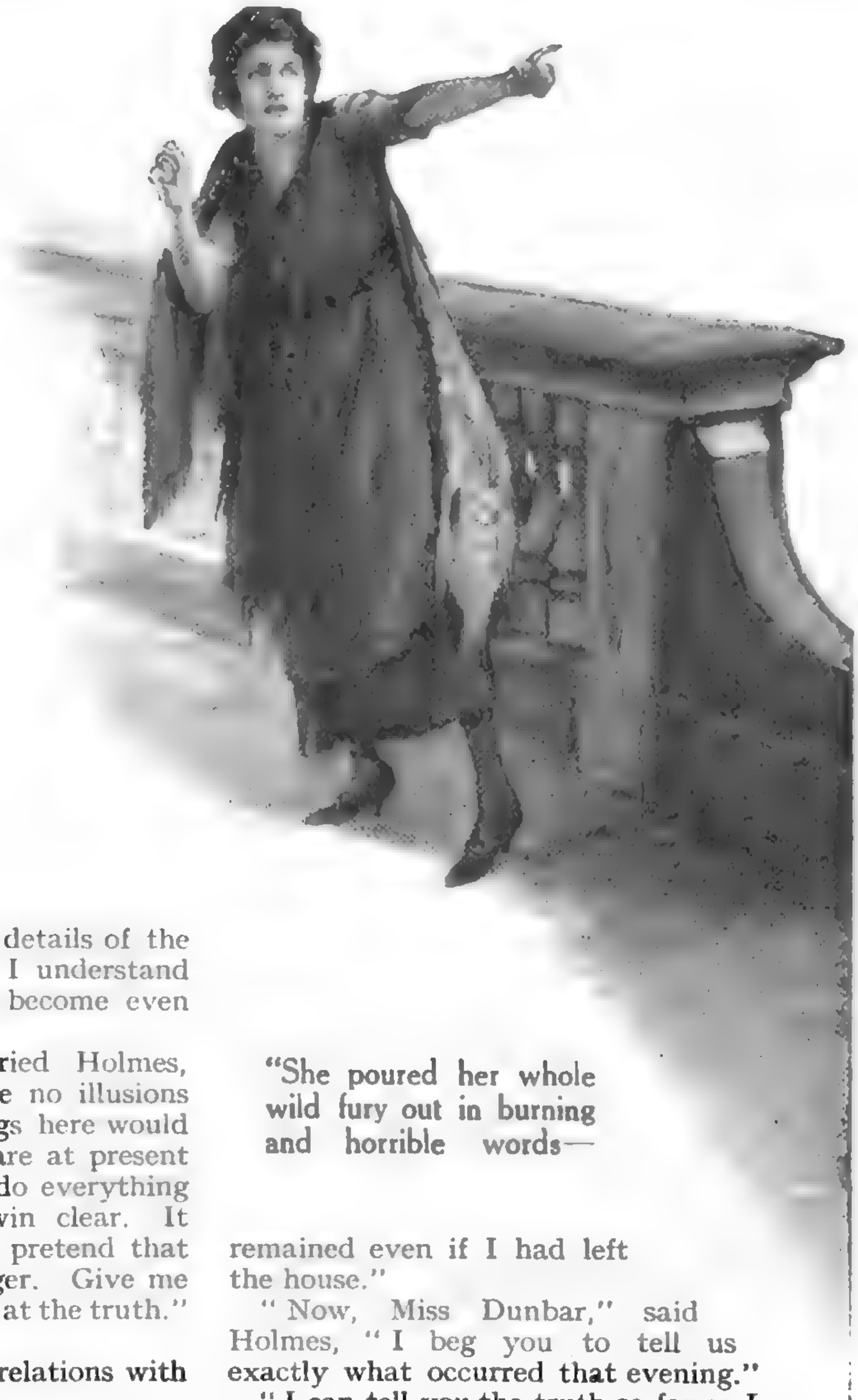
"It seemed to me incredible that such a charge could be sustained. I thought that if we waited the whole thing must clear itself up without our being compelled to enter into painful details of the inner life of the family. But I understand that far from clearing it has become even more serious."

"My dear young lady," cried Holmes, earnestly, "I beg you to have no illusions upon the point. Mr. Cummings here would assure you that all the cards are at present against us, and that we must do everything that is possible if we are to win clear. It would be a cruel deception to pretend that you are not in very great danger. Give me all the help you can, then, to get at the truth."

"I will conceal nothing."

"Tell us, then, of your true relations with Mr. Gibson's wife."

"She hated me, Mr. Holmes. She hated me with all the fervour of her tropical nature. She was a woman who would do nothing by halves, and the measure of her love for her husband was the measure also of her hatred for me. It is probable that she misunderstood our relations. I would not wish to wrong her, but she loved so vividly in a physical sense that she could hardly understand the mental, and even spiritual, tie which held her husband to me, or imagine that it was only my desire to influence his power to good ends which kept me under his roof. I can see now that I was wrong. Nothing could justify me in remaining where I was a cause of unhappiness, and yet it is certain that the unhappiness would have remained even if I had left the house."



"She poured her whole wild fury out in burning and horrible words—

"Now, Miss Dunbar," said Holmes, "I beg you to tell us exactly what occurred that evening."

"I can tell you the truth so far as I know it, Mr. Holmes, but I am in a position to prove nothing, and there are points—the most vital points—which I can neither explain nor can I imagine any explanation."

"If you will find the facts, perhaps others may find the explanation."

"With regard, then, to my presence at Thor Bridge that night, I received a note from Mrs. Gibson in the morning. It lay on

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the table of the schoolroom, and it may have been left there by her own hand. It implored me to see her there after dinner, said she had something important to say to me, and asked me to leave an answer on the sundial in the garden, as she desired no one to be in our confidence. I saw no reason for such secrecy, but I did as she asked, accepting the appointment. She asked me to destroy her note and I burned it in the schoolroom grate. She was very much afraid of her husband, who treated her with a harshness for which I frequently reproached him, and I could only imagine that she acted in this way because she did not wish him to know of our interview.

"Yet she kept your reply very carefully?"

"Yes. I was surprised to hear that she had it in her hand when she died."

"Well, what happened then?"

"I went down as I had promised. When I reached the bridge she was waiting for me. Never did I realize till that moment how this poor creature hated me. She was like a mad woman—indeed, I think she *was* a mad woman, subtly mad with the deep power of deception which insane people may have. How else could she have met me with unconcern every day and yet had so raging a hatred of me in her heart? I will not say what she said. She poured her whole wild fury out in burning and horrible words. I did not even answer—I could not. It was dreadful to see her. I put my hands to my ears and rushed away. When I left her she was standing still shrieking out her curses at me, in the mouth of the bridge."

"Where she was afterwards found?"

"Within a few yards from the spot."

"And yet, presuming that she met her death shortly after you left her, you heard no shot?"

"No, I heard nothing. But, indeed, Mr. Holmes, I was so agitated and horrified by



—I put my hands to my ears and rushed away."

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this terrible outbreak that I rushed to get back to the peace of my own room, and I was incapable of noticing anything which happened."

"You say that you returned to your room. Did you leave it again before next morning?"

"Yes; when the alarm came that the poor creature had met her death I ran out with the others."

"Did you see Mr. Gibson?"

"Yes; he had just returned from the bridge when I saw him. He had sent for the doctor and the police."

"Did he seem to you much perturbed?"

"Mr. Gibson is a very strong, self-contained man. I do not think that he would ever show his emotions on the surface. But I, who knew him so well, could see that he was deeply concerned."

"Then we come to the all-important point. This pistol that was found in your room. Had you ever seen it before?"

"Never, I swear it."

"When was it found?"

"Next morning, when the police made their search."

"Among your clothes?"

"Yes; on the floor of my wardrobe under my dresses."

"You could not guess how long it had been there?"

"It had not been there the morning before."

"How do you know?"

"Because I tidied out the wardrobe."

"That is final. Then someone came into your room and placed the pistol there in order to inculpate you."

"It must have been so."

"And when?"

"It could only have been at meal-time, or else at the hours when I would be in the schoolroom with the children."

"As you were when you got the note?"

"Yes; from that time onwards, for the whole morning."

"Thank you, Miss Dunbar. Is there any other point which could help me in the investigation?"

"I can think of none."

"There was some sign of violence on the stone-work of the bridge—a perfectly fresh chip just opposite the body. Could you suggest any possible explanation of that?"

"Surely it must be a mere coincidence."

"Curious, Miss Dunbar, very curious. Why should it appear at the very time of the tragedy and why at the very place?"

"But what could have caused it? Only great violence could have such an effect."

Holmes did not answer. His pale, eager face had suddenly assumed that tense, far-away expression which I had learned to associate with the supreme manifestations of his genius. So evident was the crisis in his mind that none of us dared to speak, and we sat, barrister, prisoner, and myself, watching him in a concentrated and absorbed silence. Suddenly he sprang from his chair, vibrating with nervous energy and the pressing need for action.

"Come, Watson, come!" he cried.

"What is it, Mr. Holmes?"

"Never mind, my dear lady. You will hear from me, Mr. Cummings. With the help of the God of justice I will give you a case which will make England ring. You will get news by to-morrow, Miss Dunbar, and meanwhile take my assurance that the clouds are lifting and that I have every hope that the light of truth is breaking through."

IT was not a long journey from Winchester to Thor Place, but it was long to me in my impatience, while for Holmes it was evident that it seemed endless; for, in his nervous restlessness, he could not sit still, but paced the carriage or drummed with his long, sensitive fingers upon the cushions beside him.

Suddenly, however, as we neared our destination he seated himself opposite to me—we had a first-class carriage to ourselves—and laying a hand upon each of my knees he looked into my eyes with the peculiarly mischievous gaze which was characteristic of his more imp-like moods.

"Watson," said he, "I have some recollection that you go armed upon these excursions of ours."

It was as well for him that I did so, for he took little care for his own safety when his mind was once absorbed by a problem, so that more than once my revolver had been a good friend in need. I reminded him of the fact.

"Yes, yes, I am a little absent-minded in such matters. But have you your revolver on you?"

I produced it from my hip-pocket, a short, handy, but very serviceable little weapon. He undid the catch, shook out the cartridges, and examined it with care.

"It's heavy—remarkably heavy," said he.

"Yes, it is a solid bit of work."

He mused over it for a minute.

"Do you know, Watson," said he, "I believe your revolver is going to have a very intimate connection with the mystery which we are investigating."

"My dear Holmes, you are joking."

"No, Watson, I am very serious. There is a test before us. If the test comes off, all will be clear. And the test will depend upon the conduct of this little weapon. One cartridge out. Now we will replace the other five and put on the safety-catch. So! That increases the weight and makes it a better reproduction."

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"Suddenly Holmes sprang from his chair. 'Come, Watson, come!' he said. 'With the help of the God of justice I will give you a case which will make England ring.'"

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I had no glimmer of what was in his mind nor did he enlighten me, but sat lost in thought until we pulled up in the little Hampshire station. We secured a ramshackle trap, and in a quarter of an hour were at the house of our confidential friend, the sergeant.

"A clue, Mr. Holmes? What is it?"

"It all depends upon the behaviour of Dr. Watson's revolver," said my friend. "Here it is. Now, officer, can you give me ten yards of string?"

The village shop provided a ball of stout twine.

"I think that this is all we will need," said Holmes. "Now, if you please, we will get off on what I hope is the last stage of our journey."

The sun was setting and turning the rolling Hampshire moor into a wonderful autumnal panorama. The sergeant, with many critical and incredulous glances, which showed his deep doubts of the sanity of my companion, lurched along beside us. As we approached the scene of the crime I could see that my friend under all his habitual coolness was in truth deeply agitated.

"Yes," he said, in answer to my remark, "you have seen me miss my mark before, Watson. I have an instinct for such things, and yet it has sometimes played me false. It seemed a certainty when first it flashed across my mind in the cell at Winchester, but one drawback of an active mind is that one can always conceive alternative explanations which would make our scent a false one. And yet—and yet—— Well, Watson, we can but try."

As he walked he had firmly tied one end of the string to the handle of the revolver. We had now reached the scene of the tragedy. With great care he marked out under the guidance of the policeman the exact spot where the body had been stretched. He then hunted among the heather and the ferns until he found a considerable stone. This he secured to the other end of his line of string, and he hung it over the parapet of the bridge so that it swung clear above the water. He then stood on the fatal spot, some distance from the edge of the bridge, with my revolver in his hand, the string being taut between the weapon and the heavy stone on the farther side.

"Now for it!" he cried.

At the words he raised the pistol to his head, and then let go his grip. In an instant it had been whisked away by the weight of the stone, had struck with a sharp crack against the parapet, and had vanished over the side into the water. It had hardly gone before Holmes was kneeling beside the stonework, and a joyous cry showed that he had found what he expected.

"Was there ever a more exact demonstration?" he cried. "See, Watson, your revolver has solved the problem!" As he spoke he pointed to a second chip of the exact size and shape of the first which had appeared on the under edge of the stone balustrade.

"We'll stay at the inn to-night," he continued, as he rose and faced the astonished sergeant. "You will, of course, get a grappling hook and you will easily restore my friend's revolver. You will also find beside it the revolver, string, and weight with which this vindictive woman attempted to disguise her own crime and to fasten a charge of murder upon an innocent victim. You can let Mr. Gibson know that I will see him in the morning, when steps can be taken for Miss Dunbar's vindication."

LATE that evening, as we sat together smoking our pipes in the village inn, Holmes gave me a brief review of what had passed.

"I fear, Watson," said he, "that you will not improve any reputation which I may have acquired by adding the Case of the Thor Bridge Mystery to your annals. I have been sluggish in mind and wanting in that mixture of imagination and reality which is the basis of my art. I confess that the chip in the stonework was a sufficient clue to suggest the true solution, and that I blame myself for not having attained it sooner.

"It must be admitted that the workings of this unhappy woman's mind were deep and subtle, so that it was no very simple matter to unravel her plot. I do not think that in our adventures we have ever come across a stranger example of what perverted love can bring about. Whether Miss Dunbar was her rival in a physical or in a merely mental sense seems to have been equally unforgivable in her eyes. No doubt she blamed this innocent lady for all those harsh dealings and unkind words with which her husband tried to repel her too demonstrative affection. Her first resolution was to end her own life. Her second was to do it in such a way as to involve her victim in a fate which was worse far than any sudden death could be.

"We can follow the various steps quite clearly, and they show a remarkable subtlety of mind. A note was extracted very cleverly from Miss Dunbar which would make it appear that she had chosen the scene of the crime. In her anxiety that it should be discovered she somewhat overdid it, by holding it in her hand to the last. This alone should have excited my suspicions earlier than it did.

"Then she took one of her husband's revolvers—there was, as you saw, an arsenal

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in the house—and kept it for her own use. A similar one she concealed that morning in Miss Dunbar's wardrobe after discharging one barrel, which she could easily do in the woods without attracting attention. She then went down to the bridge where she had contrived this exceedingly ingenious method for getting rid of her weapon. When Miss Dunbar appeared she used her last breath in pouring out her hatred, and then, when she was out of hearing, carried out her terrible purpose. Every link is now in its place and the chain is complete. The papers may ask why the mere was not dragged in the first instance, but it is easy to be wise after the event, and in any case the expanse of a reed-filled lake is no easy matter to drag unless you have a clear perception of what you are looking for and where. Well, Watson, we have helped a remarkable woman, and also a formidable man. Should they in the future join their forces, as seems not unlikely, the financial world may find that Mr. Neil Gibson has learned something in that schoolroom of Sorrow where our earthly lessons are taught."



"Holmes was kneeling beside the stonework, and a joyous cry showed that he had found what he expected."

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"DRY-UPS" and Unrehearsed Effects

STORIES BY

HARRY LAUDER,
LESLIE HENSON,
MAIDIE SCOTT,
W. H. BERRY,
GEORGE GRAVES,
LITTLE TICH,
STANLEY LUPINO,
JAY LAURIER,
JACK PLEASANTS, and
BRANSBY WILLIAMS.

"Scraggy," The Equine Comedian.
By HARRY LAUDER.

YEARS and years ago, when I was appearing at the London Pavilion, I had a song called "The Man They Left Behind," in which it was necessary that I should introduce a horse. For several weeks I searched for a suitable animal, until at last a very old friend of mine introduced me to "Scraggy" in a stable at Lambeth. He looked such a helpless bag of bones—the horse, I mean—that I burst out laughing immediately I saw him.

"If it's for a comic song you require him," said my friend, "poor old Scraggy will do you a treat—provided he stands up all right."

I had my doubts on that point myself, but I decided to take my chance, and purchased him right away. A few hours later my valet and I were dressing him up for his first appearance on the stage. We fitted a pair of cricket pads to his fore-legs, tied a "moo-poke" to his tail, and fixed a piece of matting on his back for a saddle.

When I mounted, I half expected him to give way under my weight and break in the middle, but he managed to hold together all right, and when we ambled slowly on to the stage we were greeted with one of the biggest laughs I ever heard. Just as I was congratulating myself upon the success of our entrance, somebody standing in the wings gave Scraggy a prod with some sharp instrument. He made one spring forward, then stopped dead—and I shot over his head as if I'd been fired from a gun.

Of course, the audience thought it was all



"Somebody standing in the wings gave Scraggy a prod. He made one spring forward, then stopped dead and I shot over his head."

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part of the performance, and yelled with all their might. In fact, one fellow in the gallery cried out "Do it again, Harry!"

"No," said I, rubbing my funny bone, "I only do that wance a nicht."

A Chapter of Accidents.
By LESLIE HENSON.

In my concert-party days I once remember doing a comedy dance during the usual "sit-round," and when I attempted to turn a somersault for my exit, I caught my foot in the black plush curtain and brought down the entire "set," completely enveloping the company!

A far worse chapter of accidents, however, occurred at Birmingham during the run of a pretty little song-scena in which we appeared as Red Indians. To begin with, two men were supposed to fight with knives, but the fellow who should have won accidentally dropped his weapon into the orchestra, and had to borrow the other man's knife to finish off the "scrap."

A few minutes later the Great Chief Eagle Face came gliding along the river in his canoe, and standing up in his frail craft sang a song in a rich baritone voice. This particular evening, however, the canoe appeared to be extremely "wobbly," and the chief was so anxious for his own safety that he cut his song short. The result was that, when he had finished, the stage hands were not ready for the cue to pull him off.

I was the first to grasp the situation, and I immediately dashed off the stage to take the matter into my own hands. I pulled one rope, and the canoe started to move backwards, so I decided to crawl along on my stomach and tow the craft by hand. In doing so, however, I had the misfortune to knock down the river bank, exposing myself to the full view of the audience, and revealing the fact that the "canoe" was a camouflaged sugar-box, mounted on perambulator wheels!



"I had the misfortune to knock down the river bank, revealing the fact that the 'canoe' was a camouflaged sugar-box, mounted on perambulator wheels!"

"East Lynne" Turned to Farce.
By MAIDIE SCOTT.

When quite a little girl I toured with a "fit-up" company in "East Lynne" and played the part of Little Willie. Those who know this good old-fashioned melodrama will recollect that the climax of the play is the tragic death of the child without recognizing his own mother.

Now the leading lady of the company was no lightweight, and one night, as she sobbed out her lines "Dead! And he never called me 'Mother'!" she happened to lean a little too heavily on the bed (which was "faked" from a number of ginger-beer crates), with the result that the whole affair collapsed, precipitating us both to the ground, and incidentally revealing the fact that the lifeless little Willie was dressed as a girl, and had her boots on ready to go home.

Needless to say, the audience went into hysterics, and for the rest of the performance every mention of little Willie's death provoked a fresh outburst of laughter.

Rare and Refreshing Fruit.
By W. H. BERRY.

The most remarkable "dry-up" in my experience was the result of carelessness on the part of a scene-shifter.

I was appearing in a typical "rural" play, the producer of which was most particular in insisting that each scene should bear the correct touch of "local colour."

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For example, in the first act there was an interior setting representing a Devonshire farmhouse, and in addition to the old oak rafters and the large open hearth, the realism of the scene was greatly enhanced by three large hams which hung from the ceiling in the process of drying.

The second scene was even more picturesque. I was discovered in smock and gaiters, sitting in the shade of an apple orchard in full bloom, and a realistic effect of falling blossoms gave the finishing touch to what was already a work of art.

One night, however, in addition to the round of applause which usually greeted the rise of the curtain on this paradise upon earth, I was flattered to hear also a gigantic roar of laughter. I opened my mouth to speak, but the laughter grew louder and louder. There I sat, feeling extremely pleased with myself, until I happened to raise my eyes—and then the truth thrust itself upon me.

Hanging among the apple trees were three large hams!

An Awkward Dénouement.
By GEORGE GRAVES.

While in "The Merry Widow," I accepted an invitation to a shoot in Buckinghamshire. On the way back to town the car broke down, and I had to get back to the theatre by means of tram, train, and taxi. I arrived in the theatre just as they were calling out my name. There was only one minute left before my first entrance. I grabbed a hat and cloak and went on, into the midst of as swagger a crowd as ever graced a titled lady's reception-room. All would have been well if I had not lost my grip on my cloak. It fell to the ground, disclosing me in a shooting kit, with heavy, mud-covered boots and bits of fur and feather all over me.

It was a terrific success—the audience was convulsed. But that make-up was *not* repeated!

When I was playing in "The Little Michus" it was my custom to bang my hand on a property Camembert cheese. One night the property-man left a nail in it, and when I banged the ripe and revered *fromage* the nail pierced my glove and flesh. Blood streamed out of my glove-tips, and I danced around in agony. The audience roared with glee—believing this to be a bit of "business." It was so successful as a laugh-provoker that the incident was retained—without the nail, of course!

Pathos and Bathos.
By LITTLE TICH.

Some years ago I was playing at the Theatre Royal, Nottingham, in a musical comedy called "Billy." I was entrusted with the part of a good-for-nothing son, and the first act ended with a dramatic finale, in which I was supposed to be turned out of the house, disgraced before all the servants.

"Go," said my father, in a voice of thunder, "and never darken my doors again!"

Without a word, I stepped to the doorway, and then turned with an appealing look.

"Good-bye, father," I said, "good-bye—for ever!" and with those words the whole company struck "a picture" and waited for the curtain to fall.

But the curtain didn't! After ringing frantically for about three minutes, the stage manager discovered that the fly-men had gone out for a drink, and eventually he had to climb the ladder at the side of the stage and lower the curtain himself—by which time the entire company had shuffled off the stage feeling utter fools.

The Knock-Out Blow.
By STANLEY LUPINO.

In a small touring company with which I was travelling some years ago I was cast for the *rôle* of the villain. In the principal scene the hero was supposed to fight me for the girl's hand—and, of course, to win the day with a knock-out blow.

Although he was a bigger fellow than myself, I happened to know a little more about boxing than he, and one night in my efforts to impart realism into the prize-fight, I hit him rather harder than I had intended, and he fell to the ground with what the novelists call a "sickening thud."

Hoping to give him time to recover, the "refereee" began to count the seconds very slowly, surreptitiously administering the fallen hero a gentle kick with his



"One night the property-man left a nail in the cheese, and when I banged it the nail pierced my glove and flesh. The audience roared with glee."

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"The leading lady turned to me with the remark that she wished some people could be as funny on the stage as they were *off* it."

foot as he proceeded. To me, the counting-out process seemed something like this :—

"One." (A pause.)

"Two." (Another pause.)

"Three." (Kick.)

"Four." ("Come on, Dick, get up!")

"Five." (Long pause.)

"*Three!*" (Hard kick.)

"Four." ("Get up, you idiot!")

"Five." . . .

This sort of thing continued for a good deal longer than ten seconds, although by a certain amount of repetition the "referee" had succeeded in keeping the count down to eight, until at last the hero managed to stagger to his feet.

"Hit me!" I whispered, as I stepped forward with my guard open. He looked at me inquiringly for a moment, then, realizing what was required of him, he gave me a feebie tap on the nose—and I fell like a log, amidst the derisive cheers of the gallery.

In about four seconds I was counted out and the hero declared the winner—though, to tell the truth, no sooner had the curtain fallen than he collapsed again!

A Railway Disaster.
By JAY LAURIER.

I once appeared in a drama, the climax of which was a very thrilling spectacular effect, in which the heroine was bound to the railway track, awaiting her cruel fate beneath the wheels of the oncoming express. The excitement of the audience always rose to fever heat when they heard, first the shrill whistle, then the roar of the engine and the hiss of the escaping steam drawing nearer and nearer; and when eventually the girl managed to free herself from her bonds and roll clear of the track just as the train roared past, the applause was terrific.

I was in charge of the working of the express train—a very realistic affair, consisting of a full-sized dummy engine and a number of canvas coaches, which were made to fold up in the wings on the concertina principle, becoming unfolded in succession, presenting quite a solid appearance as they crossed the stage, and folding themselves again as they reached the opposite side. The entire train was suspended by invisible wires from a cable which ran high up in the flies, and the dummy engine was pulled by means of a cord which ran along the floor.

One evening, alas! a calamity befell us. Either the heroine was too long in freeing herself from her bonds, or I pulled on the train a few seconds too early. Anyhow, the lady's flowing tresses caught in the buffer of the engine!

She struggled with all her might to disentangle them, and I slowed down the train to give her time to pull herself away, but it was no use. The audience, seeing that something was wrong, began to titter, with the result that the leading lady completely lost her temper and gave the engine a mighty push. The result was disastrous. With a clatter of folding trellis-work, the whole of the rear portion of the train rushed on to the stage and neatly folded itself concertina-fashion behind the engine, and finally the whole concern toppled over. By the time the curtain descended the audience were in a state of hysteria. The leading lady, almost foaming at the mouth with rage and humiliation, turned to me with the remark that she wished some people could be as funny on the stage as they were *off* it; and the stage manager ordered me off the side for fear that I might upset the rest of the performance.

A Wonderful Reception.
By JACK PLEASANTS.

When appearing at a well-known variety theatre in the North of England in the days before the war, I once had occasion, in company with the other artistes who were

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" on the bill," to give an extra performance. There had been a big dinner and reception given by the newly-elected Unionist candidate to all the political workers in the town, and it was arranged that all his guests should afterwards retire in a body to the theatre, where we were to give an extra show after the second house was over.

In the usual course of events I retired to my dressing-room immediately after the public performance, and remained there until the call-boy shouted my name. Having been called, I made my way to the stage, and stood in the wings waiting for my cue. Presently the orchestra bell tinkled, and my number appeared on the indicator. I braced myself together preparatory to making my entrance, when I was pleasantly surprised to hear the sound of cheering. Encouraged by this outburst, I stepped on to the stage, determined to give of my best. As soon as I appeared the entire audience rose to their feet, waving their hats, banging sticks on the floor, and cheering themselves hoarse. I smiled modestly, and waited for the applause to die down, but the cheer grew to a roar. It was the most wonderful reception I had ever received in my life, for the applause lasted for nearly five minutes, and I was quite unable to open my mouth to sing.

Then somebody sitting in front shouted "Speech!" and the applause came with renewed violence, whilst the demand for a "speech" was echoed on all sides.

Then suddenly I realized the cause of it all. Mr. Bonar Law had just entered the box at the side of the stage, and it was to him that the enthusiasm of the audience was directed.

I crept off the stage unnoticed, feeling about the size of a stick of grease-paint.



"I was so carried away by my part that I cried 'Innocent—Innocent!' and threw up both my hands. The dock fell forward—and there came one big shriek of merriment."

A Real "Dry-Up."

By BRANSBY WILLIAMS.

It was at a provincial music-hall, and I was presenting a character sketch entitled "The Stage-Door Keeper." One night, as I made my entrance, the overhead fire sprinkler opened, and a waterfall came down, drenching me to the skin. The orchestra picked up their music and instruments and fled, but I decided to stick to my guns.

The stage manager and his assistants threw brooms and mops on to the stage, and I set to work to roll up the carpets and clear up the mess, continuing with my "Stage-Door Keeper" patter all the while.

By the time I had finished my turn the stage was once more restored to order, and sprinkled with sawdust. That was a "dry-up" indeed!

Afterwards a young lady said to me: "I think that water effect was awfully funny, but doesn't it mean a serious inconvenience to other artistes who have to follow you?"

Another time I was playing the part of a hero who had been wrongfully accused of forgery, and the climax came when I was declared guilty in a crowded court.

One night, as I stood for my "trial," the canvas "dock" seemed rather insecure, so I decided to hold on to it with one hand to prevent it from falling. When the judge spoke the fateful words, however, I was so carried away with my part that I cried "Innocent—Innocent!" and threw up both hands.

The dock fell forward, and I waited for the inevitable titter which usually accompanies such stage accidents.

But instead of a titter there came one big shriek of merriment—and then I realized what had tickled everybody so immensely. In order to be ready for the next scene, I was wearing my convict breeches, with broad arrows and regulation striped stockings!

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SAINT FLOSSIE

by

PERCEVAL GIBBON

ILLUSTRATED BY W. SMITHSON BROADHEAD

SEEN from its entrance, the discreet little saloon bar, upon that dull evening of early winter, had the effect of an ornate shrine. Its nearer lights were subdued, but in the background the strong electroliers shone upon that popular altar, the bar, in a blaze and dazzle of glass and brass, with a plump and golden-haired priestess moving deftly in the celebration of its rites. Upon the plush settees quiet people sat in a still content; a town traveller was entertaining a shopkeeper in a corner; and the noises of the street reached them only as the clamour of the world might reach a hermitage.

Even the town traveller remarked upon the hush and tranquillity of the place.

"Quiet little pub!" he said. "Restful, I call it, after a day of——" He broke off and stared. "Hallo! Who's this comin' in?"

A large woman had thrust open the swing door and was moving across the room to the bar. In her very gait she was noticeable; there was a sort of showmanship in it, as of a thing performed consciously for the public eye. Under her large and elaborate hat there were brass-hued curls; her great face, with its peach-bloom complexion, its blood-lined mouth, and skilfully enhanced eyes, looked over a fur stole that exaggerated the vastness of her bosom. Trinkets clinked about her as she moved; she had—she has still—a positive aura of lavishness and overpowering self-consequence. The low-toned conversation on the settees died; everyone paid her the tribute of stares. In that little assembly of simple folk, all with a day's work behind them, she was as conspicuous as a clown in a cathedral.

She brought up alongside the bar like a steamer at a wharf; it was plain at once that she had an excellent bar-side manner. She gave to the barmaid a smile of mingled camaraderie and condescension.

"'Evenin', dear," she said. "A drop o' the usual, if you please. Cold evenin', isn't it?"

The barmaid acknowledged the salute with gratification. The new-comer drew off her gloves, laid them and her handbag on the bar, and received her potion of water-coloured spirits. She leaned upon an elbow while she sipped it, gossiped with the barmaid, and gazed blandly about her.

"I must say," she confided—"I must say, all things considered, I find gin's the best thing for keeping your figure. And I've tried most things, too."

All were listening; only the shopkeeper, in a careful whisper, gave information to his companion.

"That's Miss Floyd," he said. "Customer o' mine. Retired actress she is."

"Floyd!" repeated the traveller, thoughtfully. He started and stared at his guest, honestly aghast. "You don't mean to say—good Lord, d'you mean to tell me that *that's* all that's left of Flossie Floyd? Flossie—whose photographs used to sell all over London like postage-stamps? Why, I remember I used to have one in my room—only burnt it when I got married! It can't be her."

"It's her all right," affirmed the other. "I never saw her myself till she moved down this way last year; but I 'eard she'd been good-lookin' in her time."

"Good-looking!" The town traveller's whisper threatened to become a shout. "She was the loveliest thing that ever smiled over the footlights. Couldn't act, couldn't sing, couldn't dance; her face and her shape was all she had—and it was enough! And that's her now—that gin-tippling old hag over there! Pity she didn't die!"

"She's a good customer," said the shopkeeper, defensively.

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"'Good Lord, d'you mean to tell me that *that's* all that's left of Flossie Floyd?—

The lady at the bar caused her drink to be renewed, and continued to philosophize to an audience that hung on her every word.

"Champagne, now!" she observed. "I've seen the day when I could ha' swum in it; but it never suited me constitution. An' beer's fattenin'. So I say again—an' I don't care who says different—that, all things considered, the best——"

She rambled on uninterrupted, the focus of all eyes and ears. It is in the saloon bar that the qualities which the fresh-air world rejects come into their own. Save for reservations by the town traveller, none of her spellbound audience beheld the tragic monstrosity of her, the profitless and meretricious thing which her life had made of her. Only the town traveller's lips moved noiselessly while he gazed at her dumbly, and strove to trace in all her bulk some least lineament of the golden, glowing, holy-faced creature of five-and-twenty years before.

"Flossie Floyd!" he was repeating inwardly, over and over again. "Flossie Floyd! My God!"

For his memory had not played him false. There *had* been a day when she could have "swum in champagne," when she wore, like a bloom, upon the startling perfection of her beauty a seeming of wistful innocence; when her photographs spread like a pest over the world of young men. The Universities and public schools were rotten with them; attic bedrooms and cabins of warships were glorified by them; they spread abroad over the world upon the heels of war and commerce. Young David Baines took one with him when he left Cambridge and returned to his home in St. Petersburg. He found a frame for it, a heavy old thing of tarnished gilt about a foot square, and set it on the wall of the room that was granted him as a den in the huge old Baines house in the Galernaya.

It was still there, dimmed by age and the smoke of the cigarettes of twenty-five years, never looked at, but lovely still, until that evening when the town traveller identified Flossie Floyd.

For it was upon that night that the Komissar Baranov, reaching out from his commandeered palace in the Millionnaya, that gloomy street of frowning, fortress-like palaces, sent his private army upon a

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—Flossie—whose photographs used to sell all over London like postage-stamps?'"

'domiciliary visit" to the home of the Baines.

There had been Baineses in St. Petersburg for over a century prospering handsomely and honourably, worthy members of that strong British colony which had the trading functions of the ancient "English factory." Theirs was one of the great rambling houses opening by way of a walled courtyard and a tall arched gate into the long cobbled street which is called the Galernaya. It sheltered now David Baines, his young wife, and his widowed mother. There were also a couple of female servants who had known service and dependence too long to discard them easily. And even while Flossie Floyd in her London drink-shop was sipping and babbling, there came to these five the stamp of heavy feet upon the stones of the court, the shine of lanterns upon the windows, and a thunder of gun-butts beating upon the house-door.

"Open there, you bourgeois!" came in a roar of command and menace. "By order of the Soviet—open, will you?"

Baines, his wife, and the old lady had been sitting together by the light of a single candle. The young woman cried out; the old one put a hand to her bosom; from deeper within the house sounded the squealing of the two terrified servants.

David Baines rose. He frowned in a moment's indecision.

"I must let them in," he said. "It isn't as if we could keep them out. Don't resist them or oppose them. After all, it's the Soviet—not a mob!"

He bent and kissed both women; his wife clung to him. The noise below increased. He put her from him very gently.

"Stay with mother, dear," he said. "I'll come back to you here."

He passed down the stone stairs in the darkness; he had been born in that house and needed no light. Voices without bawled

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threats and curses—for the Bolshevik has always kept enough of God to swear by.

"I'm coming!" he shouted, fumbling at the elaborate door fastenings. "Have a little patience!"

"Hear that?" It was the renegade ex-sergeant of Guards who led the party. "Patience!" he shouted. "I'll give you patience!"

David Baines, of course, could see nothing; he was still tugging at great, old-fashioned bolts. So when the leader outside stepped forward with his rifle levelled and, at a distance of a foot, sent a nickel-jacketed German army bullet through the centre of the door, he received it in the heart. His knees gave under him and he collapsed, sinking to a heap against the foot of the door and just within his own threshold.

"Well?" bellowed the sergeant. "Are you going to open it, or must we blow it in?" He paused for an answer. "I must have got him with that shot," he said, turning to his men. "Get out a grenade, one of you! It's cold standing about here."

"Let me come! Stand away from the door, comrades!" A German ex-prisoner of war produced a hand-bomb of the old type with a fuse, and stooped to the doorstep. He looked up at the sergeant with a grin. "*Tak tozhe!*" he said. "You got him; here's blood coming under the door!"

He lit the fuse from a lantern, placed the bomb in position, and retired to cover with the rest outside the gate. Half a minute later the stillness of the sorrowful and danger-laden night was rent by the roar of the explosion; a momentary glamour of fire filled the arch of the gate. In the candle-lit room upstairs the two women, the young one and the old, clasped each other in an agony of terror; in hundreds of darkened rooms along the street hearts froze with fear upon the noise of the detonation.

"Now come on!" ordered the sergeant. "Lanterns ahead! Find the people first; we'll have plenty of time to go through the house after we've got our prisoners. In with you!"

The lanterns led the way through the gap where the door lay in splinters and what was left of David Baines sprawled broken among the wreckage. And the women, scarce breathing, rose to confront them as they stamped in a throng into the drawing-room, bringing their own lights with them to supplement the one candle.

"Good evening," said the sergeant, facetiously. "You are arrested, both of you. Who else is in the house?"

Baranov's private army consisted of nine individuals beside the sergeant. It was like a hideous nightmare to the women. There were four burly Russians of the lowest slum type in sheepskins, the German in the leather lining of a motor-overcoat, two Chinese swathed like mummies, a huge bluejacket in uniform, and a slim blond young man, who stared at the room and its equipment with open mouth, who had no visible mark of nationality or calling.

"Where is my husband?" asked David Baines's widow.

"The man who came down to the door?" She nodded; the sergeant winked to his followers. "Oh! he's safe enough; you'll see him in the hall as you go out. Now, who else is in the house?"

It took only a few minutes to complete the arrests. The two servants, imbecile with terror, were dragged forth from their foolish hiding-places; all four prisoners were put under the guard of the sailor and one of the Chinamen; and the looting of the great house commenced.

"This," cried the sergeant, gaily, "goes with me."

He scooped a collection of small silver bric-à-brac off a table; there was a roar of laughter from the others, and they scattered shouting about the house. Only one, the tall blond youth, hesitated and seemed uncertain. There was a curious air of indecision as his eyes rested on the prisoners—the younger lady supporting the elder, the two servants kneeling at their feet and clinging to their skirts.

"Aren't you going to get your share, you fool?" shouted the sergeant at him.

The youth started. "Yes," he said, after a pause. He picked up his lantern, turned, and went from the room.

THE real difficulty in running a revolution is that a leader can never be sure that his revolutionaries want the same thing as himself. Lenin and Trotsky struck for something which they nicknamed an ideal; but too many of their supporters struck only for food. This youth—Pavel they called him—was such a one. When work, black bread, and cabbage-soup all came to an end together, he accepted the revolution and its rations as the next best thing. He did not know what people meant by liberty of the bourgeoisie, or even the proletariat. Of course he could neither read nor write; in short, he was a typical Russian peasant, ignorant, docile, and kindly, driven by economic stress to unskilled labour in the towns.

He went slowly up a farther flight of stairs, came to a closed door, and paused, hesitating. At length he pushed it open and, raising his lantern, entered. There was a table in the middle of the room; he set the light and his rifle upon it and looked round.

A desk with a typewriter, three or four

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full bookshelves, the escutcheon of a Cambridge college, a few small athletic cups, big leather arm-chairs, photographs—he had wandered into what was still David Baines's den. Half its contents had no meaning for Pavel; he wandered from one to the other uncomprehending. A big photograph in a silver frame he thought he recognized as a picture of the younger lady downstairs; it was at least an intelligible object, and he turned to the other photograph with a faint curiosity. And a moment later he saw it.

A tarnished gold frame with a wide mounting surrounding a dim face that smiled with a half-seriousness forth at him. He had to take the lantern in hand to make it out plainly, and his first full apprehension of it made him catch his breath. That perfect beauty, with its purity and appeal—he recognized it! He spoke aloud.

"An ikon!" he breathed. "A saint!"

He put down the lantern, and, bowing himself as he had been taught in his childhood, he went through the complicated motions by which an orthodox Russian crosses himself.

Thrice he did this. Then, glancing behind him to see that none observed, he lifted the portrait of Flossie Floyd from the wall and tucked it beneath his cloth coat, well up under his armpit. He found that in that manner he could carry it fairly inconspicuously. He helped himself to nothing else.

He was last of the party to descend when they took the prisoners away; but he was not needed in the struggle to drag them forth when the sergeant made good his word and Mrs. Baines saw her husband.

KOMISSAR BARANOV'S stolen palace in the Millionnaya had a sweep of marble stairs to the grand salons up which the twelve men might march abreast; its state apartments were a vista of great rooms running the length of its front, panelled between gold pilasters with tapestries; it had housed a Prince whose blood was yet caked upon the floor of the cellar where they had done him to death. And the general atmosphere of it now was that of a mausoleum. It was splendid and gruesome on a gigantic scale. Yet it sank to the insignificance of a background by contrast with its tenant, Baranov.

They dragged the almost unconscious women to the room in which he was accustomed to work, a great chamber fitted with high bookshelves, and paused outside the door.

"Order, now!" counselled the sergeant, and the men fidgeted and shuffled. The sergeant knocked. "*Iti suda!*" summoned a clear voice from within. The sergeant opened the door and the prisoners and their escort passed into the presence.

The terrible Komissar looked up from the documents spread before him upon the desk at which he sat with his secretary. His eye rested on the four women, the two unmistakably mistresses, the other two as unmistakably servants, and travelled thence over the faces of the men. At that daunting scrutiny there was more fidgeting.

"Well?" demanded Baranov.

The ex-sergeant all but came to attention, but recovered himself in time.

"We carried out orders, comrade," he began, and went on to recite the events of the evening, while Baranov sat listening immovably, and the men stared one and all at him.

He was a tallish man, something over forty years of age, black-haired and clean shaven. His features were of a characterless regularity, the eyes cold, the mouth commonly rigid. It was not in his outward appearance that his quality was expressed. Rather it was a matter of demeanour; his attitude, his slightest gestures, his tones, even his occasional smiles, were charged, as the electric current charges an accumulator, with that Thing within the man which had made him what he was. One had only to watch him to understand and believe the stories that made him notorious. He had had his phase of Nihilism, of anarchism; he had served in the French Foreign Legion and successfully deserted; he had been in prison in England and a German spy during the war. Since the outbreak of the revolution he had been more Bolshevik than the Bolsheviks; his influence with the Petrograd Soviet was paramount; and his rule had been a grisly horror. None, save his victims and his slaughterers, knew when or where or why he killed.

At the end of the sergeant's recital he nodded.

"Good!" he said. "Lock them up for the night. They shall be interrogated in the morning."

He turned to his papers again, calmly, as a man resumes work after a trivial telephone call. It was a gesture entirely in his own manner. His fat little bearded secretary glanced at him curiously and then at the women. He knew what that indifference, that unstudied nonchalance, meant. Living folk mattered to Baranov; to them he gave his attention; but the dead were done with.

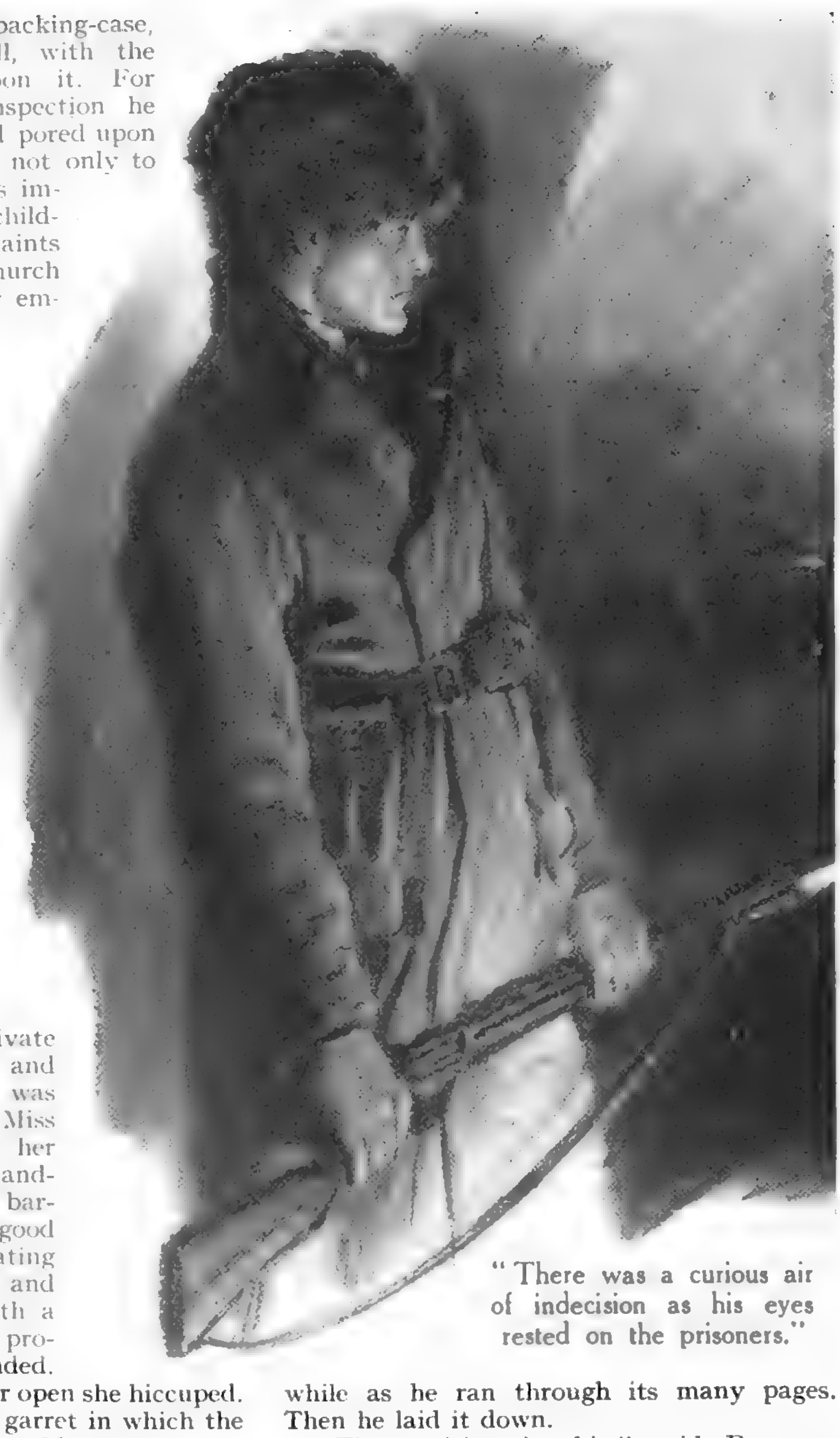
Presently Pavel was able to be alone. The private army of Baranov, when not on duty, dwelt in the top-floor of the palace, a great attic-loft honeycombed with little rooms. One of these, with a straw mattress, a bucket for his ablutions, and a packing-case table, Pavel had to himself. As a member of the garrison he drew a ration of candles. He made a light, closed the door, and drew forth his loot.

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He placed it on the packing-case, leaning against the wall, with the candle-flame shining upon it. For convenience of close inspection he knelt before the table and pored upon the picture. He wanted not only to confirm but to renew his impression of it. In his childhood he had liked the saints he knew—those in the church of his village, gorgeously embalmed in pinchbeck and sham jewels. Religion had been the one mystery of his life; and of late, without it, life had been a little barren and obvious. But here, at last, was a saint again, clad in loveliness instead of glass diamonds for a heavenly glory. He remained staring.

And presently, still kneeling, he crossed himself thrice. A moment or two later, his eyes fixed on the pictured face before him, he recited that prayer which begins "O little mother of great mercy."

And allowing for the difference in longitude between Pavel's private chapel in Petrograd and Flossie's London pub, it was at that moment that Miss Floyd, having donned her gloves and found her handbag, bade her friend the barmaid an affectionate good night, swept a devastating smile over the company, and walked to the door with a gait even a little more pronounced than she intended. And as she pulled the door open she hiccuped.



"There was a curious air of indecision as his eyes rested on the prisoners."

Three floors below the garret in which the boy knelt before the old photograph, Baranov sat suddenly back in his chair and gazed, as if upon a sudden thought, at his secretary. The little fat man became anxiously alert.

"Yes," he said, nervously. He knew enough of Baranov to fear his inspirations, but not enough to guess them. He was himself the mildest man that ever made out an order for a throat to be cut.

"Give me Lenin's letter again," directed the Komissar. There was silence for a while as he ran through its many pages. Then he laid it down.

"The position is this," said Baranov, slowly, while the secretary craned over the desk in eagerness to hear. "Litvinoff reports that opinion in England, even proletariat opinion, is adversely affected by our treatment of the bourgeois and may be fatally affected by our treatment of British subjects. Lenin trusts Litvinoff, and urges his views on me—urges them peremptorily, even. You see?"

"Yes." The secretary nodded. "But—to-night!"

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Baranov considered him. "The Englishman Baines is dead. That is true. But it is better that he should not be dead. He escaped; we know no more. That is our story. Do you understand?"

"No," replied the secretary, frankly, "I don't. The women will tell a different story and——"

He fell silent as Baranov shook his head.

"The women escaped with him," said the Komissar. "By the same road!"

His chill eyes had a flicker of mere amusement as he viewed the little man's face of consternation.

"Send me that sergeant-fellow!" he ordered.

The secretary hesitated; but it was impossible for him to disobey Baranov. Shuddering, he went upon his errand. Baranov, leaning back in his chair, the tips of his fingers joined, waited in deep thought.

He looked up as the big sergeant entered

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and marched towards the desk, and his eyes flickered past him to where the secretary hovered in the offing.

He began to speak so suddenly that both his hearers started.

"It was you who executed the Prince downstairs, was it not?"

"Yes, comrade—me and another comrade—we——"

The sergeant was going on to give details. There was eagerness in his great gross face; but Baranov stopped him.

"There is another execution for you to-night," he said, in level tones. "You will need three other comrades this time, men who can hold their tongues. And it is to be a quiet affair—no shooting!"

"I see," replied the sergeant. "In that case, the bayonet, eh?"

They might have been—in fact they were—discussing the ways and means for an everyday transaction.

Baranov shrugged. "That is your affair. Who are the three men you will take with you? They must be silent fellows, you understand!"

The sergeant nodded thoughtfully. "Well, the two Chinamen," he suggested. "They're all right. And for the other one—what about the youngster? Quiet fellow—hardly ever opens his mouth!"

Baranov considered. "All right," he said. "Go and bring them here—with their weapons—and I'll give you your orders."

The secretary walked hastily aside to give the man passage; Baranov, watching, smiled faintly. There was a while of silence in the great room, till it was broken by the sergeant's returning feet. He entered alone.

"Well?" Baranov demanded. "Where are the others?"

The secretary crept nearer to hear the reply, for the sergeant spoke in the low voice of confidence.

"It's about that young fellow Pavel, comrade," he said. "I thought I ought to tell you about that before I take him with us. What do you think I found him doing?"

"How should I know? *What* was he doing?"

The sergeant wagged his head humorously.

"I went up quietly, so as not to rouse the others, seeing it's to be a silent affair, and just pushed his door open. And may I never eat bread again if there he wasn't down on his knees on the floor, with a candle alight and all, praying before an ikon!"

The sergeant got his hoped-for effect, for the Komissar sat up sharply. He frowned.

"An ikon! Here—in this house? I thought I'd ordered them all to be thrown out. Where did he find it?"

"I *think*, comrade, he must have got it in that house in the Galernaya."

"The fool! Well, go and fetch it here—and him with it," ordered the Komissar. "This kind of thing is dangerous. I'll talk to him myself!"

He was really perturbed. He was a fanatic enemy of religion, and believed—probably with justice—that it was the most redoubtable force arrayed against Bolshevism. He rose from his chair and began to pace the floor.

"It is a symptom!" he declaimed, in his frigid voice that yet could warm to oratorical ardours. "A symptom of the old corruption that yet lives in us. Shall we have to breed a new generation which has never known slavery of the mind or the body before we can claim a victory for the Revolution? Sometimes I almost fear it!"

"He is only a boy, comrade," ventured the secretary. "If you talk to him——"

"I will talk to him," said Baranov, darkly.

THE sergeant marched in a scared Pavel, rifle on shoulder, cap on head, himself carrying the ikon at his heels, in the most approved military manner.

"Halt!" he barked, and Pavel halted, his eyes fixed on the dreaded countenance of the Komissar. "Present arms!" But Pavel knew nothing of that. "Here is the ikon, comrade."

Baranov reached out a hand for it, glanced from it to Pavel, then back to it again. He seemed for an instant bewildered; he stared at it incredulously; then suddenly he laughed briefly.

"So this is your ikon, eh? You brought it from the Galernaya and you have been praying before it?"

There was a gaiety in his manner which none of them had seen there before. Pavel trembled.

"Yes, Excellency," he stammered.

Again Baranov laughed. He turned the frame over, opened the back, and drew out the photograph of Flossie Floyd.

"Now see," he said to Pavel, "where your silly superstition has led you! You have been kneeling to this, crossing yourself and praying before *this!* You fool! This is no saint!"

Pavel uttered no word, but his blunt blond face hardened.

"These things come from England, the stronghold of capitalism. I remember when they sold them there in the streets and young fools bought them. But you are surely the first to pray before the thing!"

He shook his head at Pavel not unkindly.

"It is my saint," said Pavel. "Give it back to me!" He was trembling as he spoke.

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"He knelt before the table, pored upon the picture, and crossed himself thrice."

"Saint!" exploded Baranov. "I tell you, fool, this is a wanton, a dancing-girl, any rich man's girl——"

Pavel moved a step. "Stop!" he said.

"Just a costly vice, a money-sink, a rot in the body of the community," continued Baranov. "But since you are set on having the thing—here you are!"

With a quick motion he tore the card across, and made to toss the halves towards Pavel.

But he did not get so far, for at that moment Pavel shot him through the body.

IT was four months before the Baines ladies were released. They never knew Pavel, of course; nobody ever will again. But it is a pity that Miss Floyd, at least, nightly visiting the hushed shrine of her choice, cannot know how for an hour she reigned in that bare attic high over the Millionnaya.

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SIR RODERICK COMES TO LUNCH

BY

P. G. WODEHOUSE

ILLUSTRATED BY
A. WALLIS MILLS

THE blow fell at precisely one forty-five (summer time). Spenser, my Aunt Agatha's butler, was offering me the fried potatoes at the moment, and such was my emotion that I lofted six of them on to the sideboard with the spoon. Shaken to the core, if you know what I mean.

I've told you how I got engaged to Honoria Glossop in my efforts to do young Bingo Little a good turn. Well, on this particular morning she had lugged me round to Aunt Agatha's for lunch, and I was just saying "Death, where is thy jolly old sting?" when I realized that the worst was yet to come.

"Bertie," she said, suddenly, as if she had just remembered it, "what is the name of that man of yours—your valet?"

"Eh? Oh, Jeeves."

"I think he's a bad influence for you," said Honoria. "When we are married you must get rid of Jeeves."

It was at this point that I jerked the spoon and sent six of the best and crispest sailing on to the sideboard, with Spenser gambolling after them like a dignified old retriever.

"Get rid of Jeeves!" I gasped.

"Yes. I don't like him."

"*I* don't like him," said Aunt Agatha.

"But I can't. I mean—why, I couldn't carry on for a day without Jeeves."

"You will have to," said Honoria. "I don't like him at all."

"*I* don't like him at all," said Aunt Agatha. "I never did."

Ghastly, what? I'd always had an idea that marriage was a bit of a wash-out, but I'd never dreamed that it demanded such frightful sacrifices from a fellow. I passed the rest of the meal in a sort of stupor.

The scheme had been, if I remember, that after lunch I should go off and caddy for Honoria on a shopping tour down Regent Street; but when she got up and started collecting me and the rest of her things, Aunt Agatha stopped her.

"You run along, dear," she said. "I want to say a few words to Bertie."

So Honoria legged it, and Aunt Agatha drew up her chair and started in.

"Bertie," she said, "dear Honoria does not know it, but a little difficulty has arisen about your marriage."

"By Jove! not really?" I said, hope starting to dawn.

"Oh, it's nothing at all, of course. It is only a little exasperating. The fact is, Sir Roderick is being rather troublesome."

"Thinks I'm not a good bet? Wants to scratch the fixture? Well, perhaps he's right."

"Pray do not be so absurd, Bertie. It is nothing so serious as that. But the nature of Sir Roderick's profession unfortunately makes him—over-cautious."

I didn't get it.

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"Over-cautious?"

"Yes. I suppose it is inevitable. A nerve specialist with his extensive practice can hardly help taking a rather warped view of humanity."

I got what she was driving at now. Sir Roderick Glossop, Ho- oria's father, is always called a nerve specialist, because it sounds better, but everybody knows that he's really a sort of janitor to the looney-bin. I mean to say, when your uncle the Duke begins to feel the strain a bit and you find him in the blue drawing-room sticking straws in his hair, old Glossop is the first person you send for. He toddles round, gives the patient the once-over, talks about over-excited nervous systems, and recommends complete rest and seclusion and all that sort of thing. Practically every posh family in the country has called him in at one time or another, and I suppose that, being in that position—I mean constantly having to sit on people's heads while their nearest and dearest 'phone to the asylum to send round the wagon—does tend to make a chappie take what you might call a warped view of humanity.



"You mean he thinks I may be a looney, and he doesn't want a looney son-in-law?" I said.

Aunt Agatha seemed rather peeved than otherwise at my ready intelligence.

"Of course, he does not think anything so ridiculous. I told you he was simply exceedingly cautious. He wants to satisfy himself that you are perfectly normal." Here she paused, for Spenser had come in with the coffee. When he had gone, she went on: 'He appears to have got hold of some extraordinary story about your having pushed his son Oswald into the lake at Ditteredge Hall. Incredible, of course. Even you would hardly do a thing like that."

"Well, I did sort of lean against him, you know, and he shot off the bridge."

"Oswald definitely accuses you of having pushed him into the water. That has disturbed Sir Roderick, and unfortunately it

"It was at this point that I jerked the spoon and sent six of the best and crispest sailing on to the sideboard."

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has caused him to make inquiries, and he has heard about your poor Uncle Henry."

She eyed me with a good deal of solemnity, and I took a grave sip of coffee. We were peeping into the family cupboard and having a look at the good old skeleton. My late Uncle Henry, you see, was by way of being the blot on the Wooster escutcheon. An extremely decent chappie personally, and one who had always endeared himself to me by tipping me with considerable lavishness when I was at school; but there's no doubt he did at times do rather rummy things, notably keeping eleven pet rabbits in his bedroom; and I suppose a purist might have considered him more or less off his onion. In fact, to be perfectly frank, he wound up his career, happy to the last and completely surrounded by rabbits, in some sort of a home.

"It is very absurd, of course," continued Aunt Agatha. "If any of the family had inherited poor Henry's eccentricity—and it was nothing more—it would have been Claude and Eustace, and there could not be two brighter boys."

Claude and Eustace were twins, and had been kids at school with me in my last summer term. Casting my mind back, it seemed to me that "bright" just about described them. The whole of that term, as I remembered it, had been spent in getting them out of a series of frightful rows.

"Look how well they are doing at Oxford. Your Aunt Emily had a letter from Claude only the other day saying that they hoped to be elected shortly to a very important college club, called The Seekers."

"Seekers?" I couldn't recall any club of the name in my time at Oxford. "What do they seek?"

"Claude did not say. Truth or Knowledge, I should imagine. It is evidently a very desirable club to belong to, for Claude added that Lord Rainsby, the Earl of Datchet's son, was one of his fellow-candidates. However, we are wandering from the point, which is that Sir Roderick wants to have a quiet talk with you quite alone. Now I rely on you, Bertie, to be—I won't say intelligent, but at least sensible. Don't giggle nervously: try to keep that horrible glassy expression out of your eyes: don't yawn or fidget: and remember that Sir Roderick is the president of the West London branch of the anti-gambling league, so please do not talk about horse-racing. He will lunch with you at your flat to-morrow at one-thirty. Please remember that he drinks no wine, strongly disapproves of smoking, and can only eat the simplest food, owing to an impaired digestion. Do not offer him coffee, for he considers it the root of half the nerve-trouble in the world."

"I should think a dog-biscuit and a glass of water would about meet the case, what?"

"Bertie!"

"Oh, all right. Merely persiflage."

"Now it is precisely that sort of idiotic remark that would be calculated to arouse Sir Roderick's worst suspicions. Do please try to refrain from any misguided flippancy when you are with him. He is a very serious-minded man. . . Are you going? Well, please remember all I have said. I rely on you, and, if anything goes wrong, I shall never forgive you."

"Right ho!" I said.

And so home, with a jolly day to look forward to.

I BREAKFASTED pretty late next morning and went for a stroll afterwards. It seemed to me that anything I could do to clear the old lemon ought to be done, and a bit of fresh air generally relieves that rather foggy feeling that comes over a fellow early in the day. I had taken a stroll in the Park, and got back as far as Hyde Park Corner, when some blighter sloshed me between the shoulder-blades. It was young Eustace, my cousin. He was arm-in-arm with two other fellows, the one on the outside being my cousin Claude and the one in the middle a pink-faced chappie with light hair and an apologetic sort of look.

"Bertie, old egg!" said young Eustace, affably.

"Hallo!" I said, not frightfully chirpily.

"Fancy running into you, the one man in London who can support us in the style we are accustomed to! By the way, you've never met old Dog-Face, have you? Dog-Face, this is my cousin Bertie. Lord Rainsby—Mr. Wooster. We've just been round to your flat, Bertie. Bitterly disappointed that you were out, but were hospitably entertained by old Jeeves. That man's a corker, Bertie. Stick to him."

"What are you doing in London?" I asked.

"Oh, buzzing round. We're just up for the day. Flying visit, strictly unofficial. We oil back on the three-ten. And now, touching that lunch you very decently volunteered to stand us, which shall it be? Ritz? Savoy? Carlton? Or, if you're a member of Ciro's or the Embassy, that would do just as well."

"I can't give you lunch. I've got an engagement myself. And, by Jove," I said, taking a look at my watch, "I'm late." I hailed a taxi. "Sorry."

"As man to man, then," said Eustace, "lend us a fiver."

I hadn't time to stop and argue. I unbelted the fiver and hopped into the cab. It was twenty to two when I got to the flat.

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I bounded into the sitting-room, but it was empty.

Jeeves shimmied in.

"Sir Roderick has not yet arrived, sir."

"Good egg!" I said. "I thought I should find him smashing up the furniture."





"As I was putting it on I got a sort of impression that it was a trifle roomy."

My experience is that the less you want a fellow, the more punctual he's bound to be, and I had had a vision of the old lad pacing the rug in my sitting-room, saying "He cometh not!" and generally hotting up. "Is everything in order?"

"I fancy you will find the arrangements quite satisfactory, sir."

"What are you giving us?"

"Cold consommé, a cutlet, and a savoury, sir. With lemon-squash, iced."

"Well, I don't see how that can hurt him. Don't go getting carried away by the excitement of the thing and start bringing in coffee."

"No, sir."

"And don't let your eyes get glassy, because, if you do, you're apt to find yourself in a padded cell before you know where you are."

"Very good, sir."

There was a ring at the bell.

"Stand by, Jeeves," I said. "We're off!"

I HAD met Sir Roderick Glossop before, of course, but only when I was with Honoria: and there is something about Honoria which makes almost anybody you meet in the same room seem sort of under-sized and trivial by comparison. I had never realized till this moment what an extraordinarily formidable old bird he was. He had a pair of shaggy eyebrows which gave his eyes a piercing look which was not at all the sort of thing a fellow wanted to encounter on an empty stomach. He was fairly tall and fairly broad, and he had the most enormous head, with practically no hair on it, which made it seem bigger and much more like the dome of St. Paul's. I suppose he must have taken about a nine or something in hats. Shows what a rotten thing it is to let your brain develop too much.

"What ho! What ho! What ho!" I said, trying to strike the genial note, and then had a sudden feeling that that was just the sort of thing I had been warned not to say. Dashed difficult it is to start things going properly on an occasion like this. A fellow living in a London flat is so handicapped. I mean to say, if I had been the young squire greeting the visitor in the country, I could have said "Welcome to Meadowsweet Hall!" or something zippy like that. It sounds silly to say "Welcome to Number 6A, Crichton Mansions, Berkeley Street, W."

"I am afraid I am a little late," he said, as we sat down. "I was detained at my club by Lord Alastair Hungerford, the Duke of Ramfurline's son. His Grace, he informed me, had exhibited a renewal of the symptoms which have been causing the family so much concern. I could not leave him immediately. Hence my unpunctuality, which I trust has not discommoded you."

"Oh, not at all. So the Duke is off his rocker, what?"

"The expression which you use is not precisely the one I should have employed myself with reference to the head of perhaps

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the noblest family in England, but there is no doubt that cerebral excitement does, as you suggest, exist in no small degree." He sighed as well as he could with his mouth full of cutlet. "A profession like mine is a great strain, a great strain."

"Must be."

"Sometimes I am appalled at what I see around me." He stopped suddenly and sort of stiffened. 'Do you keep a cat, Mr. Wooster?"

"Eh? What? Cat? No, no cat."

"I was conscious of a distinct impression that I had heard a cat mewing either in the room or very near to where we are sitting."

"Probably a taxi or something in the street."

"I fear I do not follow you."

'I mean to say, taxis squawk, you know. Rather like cats in a sort of way."

"I had not observed the resemblance," he said, rather coldly.

"Have some lemon-squash," I said. The conversation seemed to be getting rather difficult.

"Thank you. Half a glassful, if I may." The hell-brew appeared to buck him up, for he resumed in a slightly more pally manner. "I have a particular dislike for cats. But I was saying—— Oh, yes. Sometimes I am positively appalled at what I see around me. It is not only the cases which come under my professional notice, painful as many of those are. It is what I see as I go about London. Sometimes it seems to me that the whole world is mentally unbalanced. This very morning, for example, a most singular and distressing occurrence took place as I was driving from my house to the club. The day being clement, I had instructed my chauffeur to open my landaulette, and I was leaning back, deriving no little pleasure from the sunshine, when our progress was arrested in the middle of the thoroughfare by one of those blocks in the traffic which are inevitable in so congested a system as that of London."

I suppose I had been letting my mind wander a bit, for when he stopped and took a sip of lemon-squash I had a feeling that I was listening to a lecture and was expected to say something.

"Hear, hear!" I said.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Nothing, nothing. You were saying——"

"The vehicles proceeding in the opposite direction had also been temporarily arrested, but after a moment they were permitted to proceed. I had fallen into a meditation, when suddenly the most extraordinary thing took place. My hat was snatched abruptly from my head! And as I looked back I perceived it being waved in a kind of feverish triumph from the interior of a taxi-cab, which, even as I looked, disappeared through a gap in the traffic and was lost to sight."

I didn't laugh, but I distinctly heard a couple of my floating ribs part from their moorings under the strain.

"Must have been meant for a practical joke," I said. "What?"

This suggestion didn't seem to please the old boy.

"I trust," he said, "I am not deficient in an appreciation of the humorous, but I confess that I am at a loss to detect anything akin to pleasantry in the outrage. The action was beyond all question that of a mentally unbalanced subject. These mental lesions may express themselves in almost any form. The Duke of Ramfurline, to whom I had occasion to allude just now, is under the impression—this is in the strictest confidence—that he is a canary; and his seizure to-day, which so perturbed Lord Alastair, was due to the fact that a careless footman had neglected to bring him his morning lump of sugar. Cases are common, again, of men waylaying women and cutting off portions of their hair. It is from a branch of this latter form of mania that I should be disposed to imagine that my assailant was suffering. I can only trust that he will be placed under proper control before he—— Mr. Wooster, there *is* a cat close at hand! It is *not* in the street! The mewing appears to come from the adjoining room."

THIS time I had to admit there was no doubt about it. There was a distinct sound of mewing coming from the next room. I punched the bell for Jeeves, who drifted in and stood waiting with an air of respectful devotion.

"Sir?"

"Oh, Jeeves," I said. "Cats! What about it? Are there any cats in the flat?'

"Only the three in your bedroom, sir."

"What!"

"Cats in his bedroom!" I heard Sir Roderick whisper in a kind of stricken way, and his eyes hit me amidships like a couple of bullets.

"What do you mean," I said, "only the three in my bedroom?"

"The black one, the tabby, and the small lemon-coloured animal, sir."

"What on earth——?"

I charged round the table in the direction of the door. Unfortunately, Sir Roderick had just decided to edge in that direction himself, with the result that we collided in the doorway with a good deal of force, and staggered out into the hall together. He came smartly out of the clinch and grabbed an umbrella from the rack.

"Stand back!" he shouted, waving it over his head. "Stand back, sir! I am armed!"

It seemed to me that the moment had come to be soothing.

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"Awfully sorry I barged into you," I said. "Wouldn't have had it happen for worlds. I was just dashing out to have a look into things."

He appeared a trifle reassured, and lowered the umbrella. But just then the most frightful shindy started in the bedroom. It sounded as though all the cats in London, assisted by delegates from outlying suburbs, had got together to settle their differences once for all. A sort of augmented orchestra of cats.

"This noise is unendurable," yelled Sir Roderick. "I cannot hear myself speak."

"I fancy, sir," said Jeeves, respectfully, "that the animals may have become somewhat exhilarated as the result of having discovered the fish under Mr. Wooster's bed."

The old boy tottered.

"Fish! Did I hear you rightly?"

'Sir?"

"Did you say that there was a fish under Mr. Wooster's bed?"

"Yes, sir."

Sir Roderick gave a low moan, and reached for his hat and stick.

"You aren't going?" I said.

"Mr. Wooster, I *am* going! I prefer to spend my leisure time in less eccentric society."

"But I say. Here, I must come with you. I'm sure the whole business can be explained. Jeeves, my hat."

Jeeves rallied round. I took the hat from him and shoved it on my head.

"Good heavens!"

Beastly shock it was! The bally thing had absolutely engulfed me, if you know what I mean. Even as I was putting it on I got a sort of impression that it was a trifle roomy; and no sooner had I let go of it than it settled down over my ears like a kind of extinguisher.

"I say! This isn't my hat!"

"It is *my* hat!" said Sir Roderick in about the coldest, nastiest voice I'd ever heard. "The hat which was stolen from me this morning as I drove in my car."

'But——"

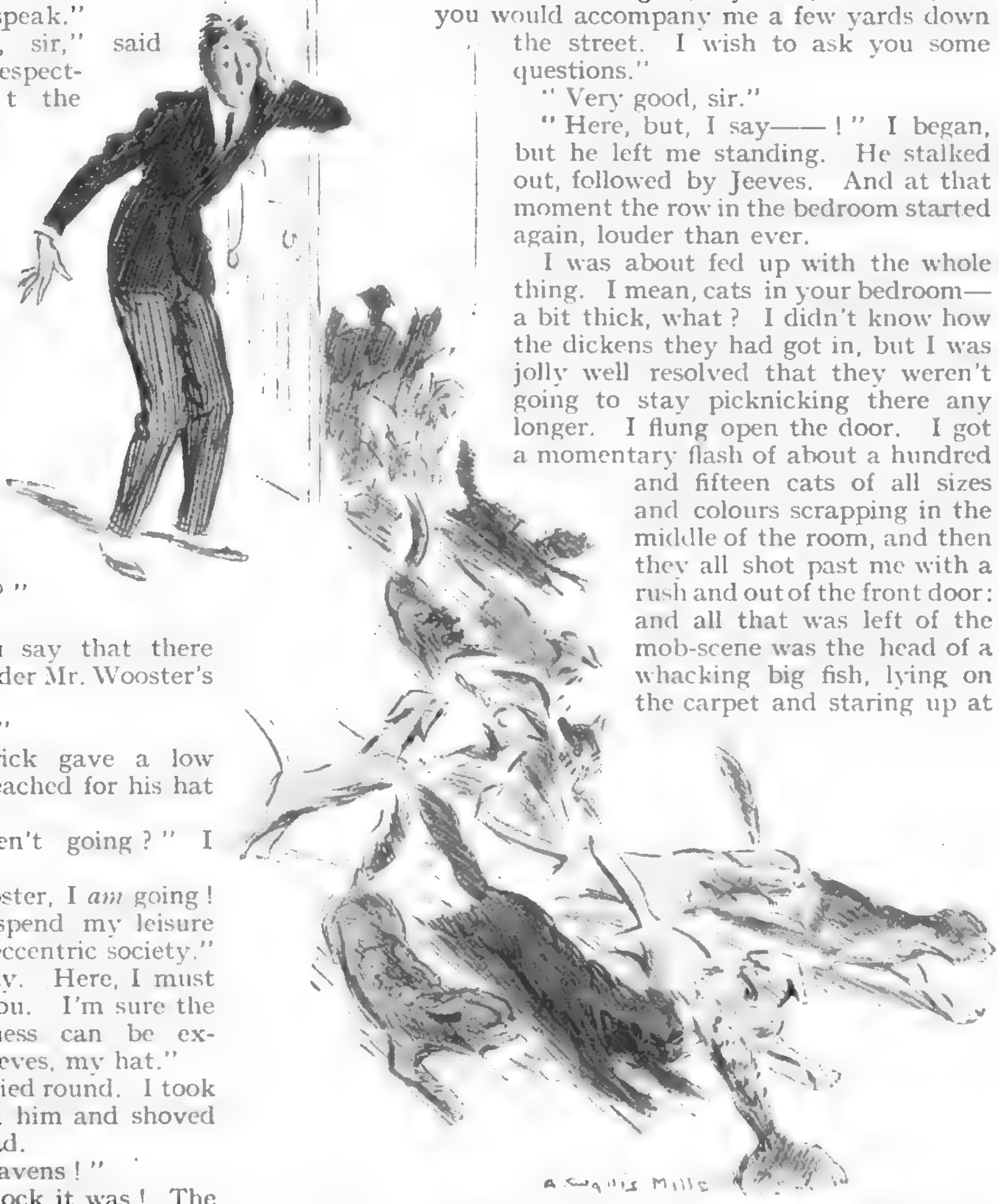
I suppose Napoleon or somebody like that would have been equal to the situation, but I'm bound to say it was too much for me. I just stood there goggling in a sort of coma, while the old boy lifted the hat off me and turned to Jeeves.

"I should be glad, my man," he said, "if you would accompany me a few yards down the street. I wish to ask you some questions."

"Very good, sir."

"Here, but, I say——!" I began, but he left me standing. He stalked out, followed by Jeeves. And at that moment the row in the bedroom started again, louder than ever.

I was about fed up with the whole thing. I mean, cats in your bedroom—a bit thick, what? I didn't know how the dickens they had got in, but I was jolly well resolved that they weren't going to stay picknicking there any longer. I flung open the door. I got a momentary flash of about a hundred and fifteen cats of all sizes and colours scrapping in the middle of the room, and then they all shot past me with a rush and out of the front door: and all that was left of the mob-scene was the head of a whacking big fish, lying on the carpet and staring up at



"I got a momentary flash of about a hundred and fifteen cats—they all shot past me with a rush and out of the front door."

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me in a rather austere sort of way, as if it wanted a written explanation and apology.

There was something about the thing's expression that absolutely chilled me, and I withdrew on tip-toe and shut the door. And, as I did so, I bumped into someone.

"Oh, sorry!" he said.

I spun round. It was the pink-faced chappie, Lord Something or other, the fellow I had met with Claude and Eustace.

"I say," he said, apologetically, "awfully sorry to bother you, but those weren't my cats I met just now legging it downstairs, were they? They looked like my cats."

"They came out of my bedroom."

"Then they *were* my cats!" he said, sadly. "Oh, dash it!"

"Did you put cats in my bedroom?"

"Your man, what's his name, did. He rather decently said I could keep them there till my train went. I'd just come to fetch them. And now they've gone! Oh, well, it can't be helped, I suppose. I'll take the hat and the fish, anyway."

I was beginning to dislike this chappie.

"Did you put that bally fish there, too?"

"No, that was Eustace's. The hat was Claude's." I sank limply into a chair.

"I say, you couldn't explain this, could you?" I said. The chappie gazed at me in mild surprise.

"Why, don't you know all about it? I say!" He blushed profusely. "Why, if you don't know about it, I shouldn't wonder if the whole thing didn't seem rummy to you."

"Rummy is the word."

"It was for The Seekers, you know."

"The Seekers?"

"Rather a blood club, you know, up at Oxford, which your cousins and I are rather keen on getting into. You have to pinch something, you know, to get elected. Some sort of a souvenir, you know. A policeman's helmet, you know, or a door-knocker or something, you know. The room's decorated with the things at the annual dinner, and everybody makes speeches and all that sort of thing. Rather jolly! Well, we wanted rather to make a sort of special effort and do the thing in style, if you understand, so we came up to London to see if we couldn't pick up something here that would be a bit out of the ordinary. And we had the most amazing luck right from the start. Your cousin Claude managed to collect a quite decent top-hat out of a passing car, and your cousin Eustace got away with a really goodish salmon or something from Harrods, and I snaffled three excellent cats all in the first hour. We were fearfully braced, I can tell you. And then the difficulty was to know where to park the things till our train went. You look so beastly conspicuous, you know, tooling about London with a fish and a lot of cats. And then Eustace remembered you, and we all came on here in a cab. You were out, but your man said it would be all right. When we met you, you were in such a hurry that we hadn't time to explain. Well, I think I'll be taking the hat, if you don't mind."

"It's gone."

"Gone?"

"The fellow you pinched it from happened to be the man who was lunching here. He took it away with him."

"Oh, I say! Poor old Claude will be upset. Well, how about the goodish salmon or something?"

"Would you care to view the remains?" He seemed all broken up when he saw the wreckage.

"I doubt if the committee would accept that," he said, sadly. "There isn't a frightful lot of it left, what?"

"The cats ate the rest."

He sighed deeply.

"No cats, no fish, no hat. We've had all our trouble for nothing. I do call that hard! And on top of that—I say, I hate to ask you, but you couldn't lend me a tenner, could you?"

"A tenner? What for?"

"Well, the fact is, I've got to pop round and bail Claude and Eustace out. They've been arrested."

"Arrested!"

"Yes. You see, what with the excitement of collaring the hat and the salmon or something, added to the fact that we had rather a festive lunch, they got a bit above themselves, poor chaps, and tried to pinch a motor-lorry. Silly, of course, because I don't see how they could have got the thing to Oxford and shown it to the committee. Still, there wasn't any reasoning with them, and, when the driver started making a fuss, there was a bit of a mix-up, and Claude and Eustace are more or less languishing in Vine Street police-station till I pop round and bail them out. So if you could manage a tenner—Oh, thanks, that's fearfully good of you. It would have been too bad to leave them there, what? I mean, they're both such frightfully good chaps, you know. Everybody likes them up at the 'Varsity. They're fearfully popular."

"I bet they are!" I said.

WHEN Jeeves came back, I was waiting for him on the mat. I wanted speech with the blighter.

"Well?" I said.

"Sir Roderick asked me a number of questions, sir, respecting your habits and mode of life, to which I replied guardedly."

"I don't care about that. What I want to know is why you didn't explain the whole thing to him right at the start? A word

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from you would have put everything clear."

"Yes, sir."

"Now he's gone off thinking me a looney."

"I should not be surprised, from his conversation with me, sir, if some such idea had not entered his head."

I was just starting in to speak, when the telephone-bell rang. Jeeves answered it.

"No, madam, Mr. Wooster is not in. No, madam, I do not know when he will return. No, madam, he left no message. Yes, madam, I will inform him." He put back the receiver. "Mrs. Gregson, sir."

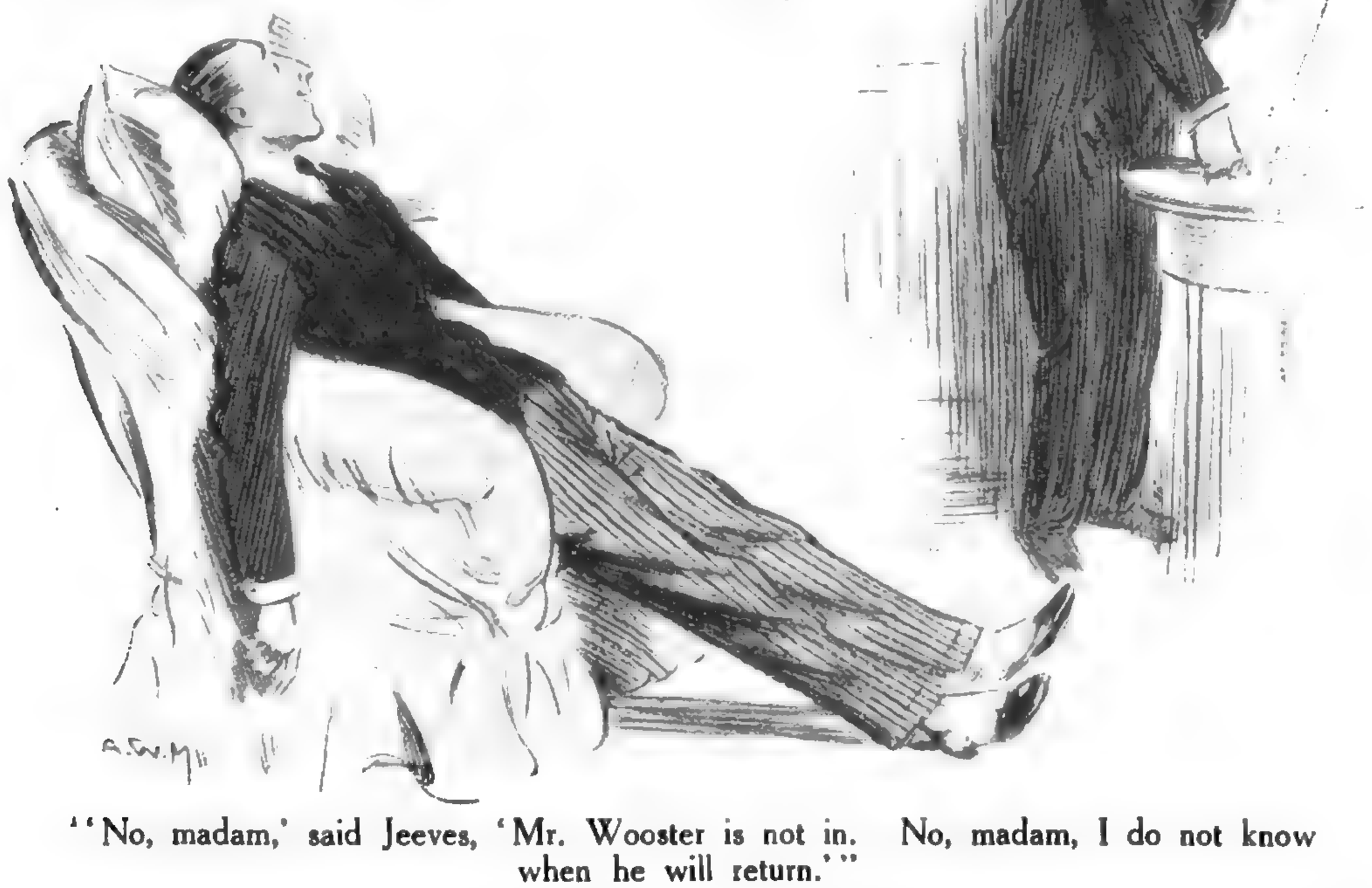
Aunt Agatha! I had been expecting it. Ever since the luncheon-party had blown out a fuse, her shadow had been hanging over me, so to speak.

"Does she know? Already?"

"I gather that Sir Roderick has been speaking to her on the telephone, sir, and——"

"No wedding bells for me, what?"

Jeeves coughed.



"'No, madam,' said Jeeves, 'Mr. Wooster is not in. No, madam, I do not know when he will return.'"

"Mrs. Gregson did not actually confide in me, sir, but I fancy that some such thing may have occurred. She seemed decidedly agitated, sir."

It's a rummy thing, but I'd been so snootered by the old boy and the cats and the fish and the hat and the pink-faced chappie and all the rest of it that the bright side simply hadn't occurred to me till now. By Jove, it was like a bally weight rolling off my chest! I gave a yelp of pure relief.

"Jeeves," I said, "I believe you worked the whole thing!"

"Sir?"

"I believe you had the jolly old situation in hand right from the start."

"Well, sir, Spenser, Mrs. Gregson's butler, who inadvertently chanced to overhear something of your conversation when you were lunching at the house, did mention certain of the details to me; and I confess that, though it may be a liberty to say so, I entertained hopes that something might occur to prevent the match. I doubt if the young lady was entirely suitable to you, sir."

"And she would have shot you out on your ear five minutes after the ceremony."

"Yes, sir. Spenser informed me that she had expressed some such intention. Mrs. Gregson wishes you to call upon her immediately, sir."

"She does, eh? What do you advise, Jeeves?"

"I think a trip to the south of France might prove enjoyable, sir."

"Jeeves," I said, "you are right, as always. Pack the old suit-case, and meet me at Victoria in time for the boat-train. I think that's the manly, independent course, what?"

"Absolutely, sir!" said Jeeves.

(*Next month: "Aunt Agatha Takes the Count."*)

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THE BOOK I MOST ENJOYED WRITING

A SYMPOSIUM OF WELL-KNOWN NOVELISTS

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

I HAVE never written to order in my life or sold any work until it was well on the way to completion. Therefore I have enjoyed writing every book, whereas, if I had written under pressure with a feeling of compulsion, I should never have regarded it as anything but a task. Naturally, as I regard the psychic question as the most important in the world, it is writing books on that subject which has given me most satisfaction, though the least productive from the financial point of view.

I had great satisfaction, also, from my "British Campaign in Flanders," because I had devised my own system of intelligence quite apart from (in fact, in opposition to) that of the War Office. I knew that my facts were true, and I knew that I had got them by my own wits, and that no one else had got them, and that was naturally a source of satisfaction. I have had little to change, save to fill up names and places which the Censor deleted. Of my novels, "The White Company" gave me most pleasure. I was young and full of the first joy of life and action, and I think I got some of it into my pages. When I wrote the last line, I remember that I cried: "Well, I'll never beat that," and threw the inky pen at the opposite wall, which was papered with duck's-egg green! The black smudge was there for many a day.



SIR A. CONAN DOYLE.
Photo. Ransford.

"Rodney Stone" I enjoyed also; for I always had, and have, a love of boxing and an admiration of the old fighting men, who were humble heroes.

Verse gives greater pleasure than prose, for it is a more compact, carefully-chiselled article. There, also, I have had occasional satisfaction and occasional disappointment.

MISS KATHLYN RHODES.

I think I enjoyed writing "Afterwards" more than any of my other books, though I can give no reason for the preference. Next comes "Courage"—in this case I enjoyed writing it because it recalled happy days spent in Italy. There was an odd coincidence bound up with "Afterwards." I rather liked inventing a small girl called Cherry. Weeks later, while acting as secretary in a war-hospital, I recognized my own Cherry—to the life—in the matron's small daughter, also named Cherry. Everyone who read "Afterwards" congratulated me on my portrait of "Matron's Cherry"—yet I never heard of her until the book had been published. Talking of names, the "hero" in "Afterwards" has no Christian name. I chose the surname Anstice from a war-list, but could not find a name to suit it, so Dr. Anstice never had a Christian name at all. Only one reviewer remarked on the omission!

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MR. RAFAEL SABATINI.

You have asked me a question to which I find it more than difficult to return an answer satisfactorily. At the moment it seems to me that "Scaramouche" is the book I most enjoyed writing. But I suspect that this is because "Scaramouche" is the last book that I have written, and distance has not yet lent it that disenchantment which my books procure me. The fact is that I am a thoroughly unnatural parent where my literary offspring are concerned. I take no sort of satisfaction or pride in any but the book I happen to be writing at the moment. That there is joy in accomplishment I know, because I have just experienced it. But in retrospect there is only despair, effacing the memory of that joy, and so rendering comparisons impossible. I like to think that the reason of this is that I have not yet exhausted my capacity to do better than I have done, and I tremble to think of the time when I may cease to blush for these children of my fancy. I view complacency in this, as in other matters of life, merely as the outward sign of intellectual stagnation. I sincerely trust that these particulars may meet the case. It may not be very satisfactory; but it is sincere.

MR. J. D. BERESFORD.

The book I most enjoyed writing was 'The Hampdenshire Wonder." It was my second attempt at a novel—if it can be called a novel: there is not, for instance, the least shadow of a love story in it. My first book had "been about" for over two years. It was a long and intensely realistic life history, or the beginning of one, and "The Hampdenshire Wonder" was a pleasant escape into fantasy. I never had any difficulty with it. It might have been a better book, possibly, if I had. All the time I was writing it I had the feeling of being supplied with abundant material and I seemed to have very little trouble in expressing it. Also, the story was a "lark." I felt a delightful irresponsibility in setting it down. One was not haunted by the fear of anachronisms, since the thing was pitched slightly into the future. But altogether I thoroughly enjoyed doing it. It was a short book, only just over sixty thousand words, and I wrote it in three months—in the intervals of trying to earn a living.



MR. J. D. BERESFORD

Just why I never felt the same freedom and irresponsibility with other books I cannot say. It may be that I never hoped to get "The Hampdenshire Wonder" published. My first book had not been accepted when the second was begun, and I had had no experience of the terrors of professional criticism! It is interesting to note that this book has had a smaller sale than any other I have written, including even collections of sketches. I can only suppose the just inference to be that when I write to please myself, I please no one else.

MR. BERNARD SHAW.

The writing of a book is not a lark to be enjoyed; it is a job to be done. The question should be addressed to amateurs, not to workmen.

MRS. BAILLIE REYNOLDS.

The book which gave me the most pleasure to write was possibly the first I ever tried my hand upon. It was called "A Moorland Squire," or—in the language of my family, who chaffed me unmercifully—"A Morland, Esq."

This masterpiece has never seen the light. I came across some pages of it the other day, immured in an old cupboard.

Another book which I wrote off at full speed and with extraordinary zest was "Thalassa!" A curious fact with regard to this book was that, when it was done, I thought it so poor that I did not wish to publish it. I went to Sir George Hutchinson—as he has often since laughingly reminded me—and begged him not to send it to press, as I had come to the conclusion that it was too bad for publication. He knew better; and the question he put to me shows, I think, his great acumen: "*How did you feel when you were writing it?* Didn't it convince you at the time?" I was constrained to admit it. "Then it will convince others," he replied, confidently; and this book has been my greatest success, as far as a wide public is concerned, having run into more than a hundred and fifty thousand copies.

Next to this I would place, in order of pleasure in writing, "The Daughter Pays." This book I wrote in the dark and terrible winter 1915-16. I had two boys at the front, and my husband was desperately ill

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that winter. A nurse was impossible to obtain, all of them being occupied with the wounded. I sometimes think that the writing of this novel was what kept me going through that difficult period. I loved the story, and wrote the whole of it in less than twelve weeks. Next to "Thalassa!" it is, I think, the most popular of my novels, and is now having great success in the U.S.A. on the films.

I remember one of my readers—and a very distinguished lady, too—writing to me to say that she forced herself to leave off reading it from time to time, in order not to finish it too soon! That is the kind of tribute I most love. I would far rather have people say, "I could not put your book down" than have them say, "Your book is very clever." And it is certain that the books my public have most enjoyed have been the books it was the greatest pleasure to write.



MRS. BAILLIE REYNOLDS.
Photo. Vandyk.

MR. G. K. CHESTERTON

thinks, on the whole, that "The Flying Inn" was the book that amused him most to write, though he got a good deal of pleasure out of two controversial ones — *i.e.*, "Heretics" and "Orthodoxy."

MR. COMPTON MACKENZIE.

I cannot claim to have enjoyed writing any of my books; they are associated with maddening interludes of physical pain. Even when all the circumstances are favourable, I write with such difficulty, straining and groaning over every word (unless I am writing dialogue), that "enjoy" cannot be used in connection with such torment. I wrote the second half of "Guy and Pauline" waiting for a telegram to fetch me to Gallipoli. I wrote "Sylvia Scarlett" waiting for a telegram to send me to Tripoli, and with doctors continually arriving to hold medical boards over my carcass. I wrote "Poor Relations" almost entirely in bed; I wrote half the second volume of "Sinister Street" working eight or nine hours at a stretch all night through, because it was impossible to work by day, owing to the excitement of the early days of the War. I rather enjoyed writing the first two or three chapters of the first volume of "Sinister Street" because I was working in a diminutive room covered with a black and gold Chinese wallpaper and furnished with red lacquer; but that pleasure only lasted six weeks, when I had to go to America, and I could not write any more of "Sinister Street" for seven months, which meant that the rest of the volume was finished against time. I might have enjoyed writing "Carnival" if, in the middle of it, I had not had to sell some of my best-loved books to pay the household bills. "The Vanity Girl" was written in a cloud of worries, and as for "Rich Relatives," my publisher cannot read it, for it is associated in his mind with such difficulties in getting it finished by me and getting it produced by himself. I did enjoy writing the first four pages of "The Passionate Elopement," but I cannot have enjoyed the remainder, for it took two years to finish. No; the only pleasure I get from writing is an idea that I am going to enjoy writing a book planned for ten years hence. I even deny myself the pleasure of writing about some of my contemporaries, which really might be enjoyable.



MR. COMPTON MACKENZIE.

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MR. W. W. JACOBS.

My memory for some forms of enjoyment is not very good. I am not asked which book added most to my troubles, or took the greatest toll of my hair, but: which—book—I—most—enjoyed—writing! Well, let us say "Salthaven." I can truthfully say that I enjoyed writing that as much as any of my stories. I seem to remember that it came easily—and I am not ungrateful.

MR. FRANK SWINNERTON.

I do not think you will find many authors who really enjoy the act of writing. I know only one who does, and he is a man in whom energy is superabundant. As a rule the author enjoys planning his book and thinking about it; he loves to dwell in thought upon his characters, his ideas, his situations, but he postpones as late as he possibly can the hard labour of composition. I am afraid that the only novel that I have really enjoyed writing is the first one of all—a book called "The Merry Heart." For other reasons, as a friend has just remarked, I enjoyed writing a critical study of the works of Robert Louis Stevenson. But apart from these books, there is none that I remember otherwise than as a triumph of determination over laziness and sloth. The rewards of authorship are, of course, another matter; and so are the joys of inventing and developing a book. These have nothing to do with your specific inquiry.



MR. FRANK SWINNERTON.
A Snapshot by Mrs. St. John Ervine.

MISS CLEMENCE DANE.

I dislike writing, and get little pleasure out of the actual work. The one exception is my last play—"Will Shakespeare." That I enjoyed working at because I loved the subject, but the actual work is always to me depressing and exhausting. I am afraid this is unromantic, but it's true.

MR. HUGH WALPOLE.

The book of mine that I have most enjoyed writing was "The Green Mirror," my own favourite amongst my books. I enjoyed this most, I think, because I had a theme and a background to which I was sympathetic, and because I seemed to know the characters in that book better than in others.

MR. BARRY PAIN.

I think that the book that a man most enjoys writing is generally his first book. But I always enjoy writing unless, as sometimes happens, I am writing to order, or am tired of my subject. There is also a special pleasure in setting up a difficulty and dealing with it, just as painters rather like to make difficulties for themselves by blending lights of different kinds, and so on. For that reason I particularly enjoyed writing my last book, "Going Home." That book was fantasy. It was written parallel to real life, but at a distance from it; the deviation at the beginning of the book being in the direction of humour and at the close of the book in the direction of poetry. The difficulty of getting as much as possible into as few words as possible is also very attractive; but the importance of a work being now judged by its length, brevity is a virtue which has to be its own reward.



MR. BARRY PAIN.
From the Painting by Mr. Scott Bridgwater.

MISS SHEILA KAYE-SMITH.

The book I most enjoyed writing was my first book, "The Tramping Methodist," because it was not written with a view to publication, so I had no publishers or public to think of while I was writing.

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IAN HAY (MAJOR BEITH, C.B.E.).

In the ordinary way, the book an author enjoys writing most is his second. His first is written in labour and uncertainty. He has no idea whether it will ever be accepted by a publisher, or, if it is accepted, whether it will ever be read. But when his first-born *has* been accepted, *and* published, and has met with a sufficient measure of indulgence from the critics and appreciation from the public, and the publisher has said: 'My dear fellow, you must let us have another novel in time for publication next autumn," then the whole face of the world is changed. All Nature seems smiling and gay. Blind alleys no longer exist. Our author sits down forthwith and plunges into work on his second novel with the exhilaration which comes from writing, for the first time, for certain publication. That is why I enjoyed writing "The Right Stuff" more than any other novel of mine.



IAN HAY (MAJOR J. H. BEITH).
Photo. Elliott & Fry.

There are two other books whose memories I shall always particularly cherish. One was 'The First Hundred Thousand," the writing of which—it was scribbled mostly, in pencil, in a field despatch book—afforded me real relief and distraction from the grim and pressing business of trench warfare.

The other is 'The Willing Horse"—a picture as faithful as I can make it, before memory becomes blurred, of London during the War, and the strange welter of heroism, frivolity, stoicism, hysteria, extravagance, privation, danger to life and indifference to death through which the greatest city in the world shouldered its way—on the whole, with immense credit to itself—for more than four long years.

Also, "The Willing Horse" is a tribute to those men and women, young and old, who played the game throughout—who shouldered the burden without comment or condition as a matter of course, jettisoning health, prospects, too often life itself, in order to be able to shoulder something more than their share. Many of these have not survived: more lamentable still, the moulds which cast them appear for the moment to be broken. But their memory and example remain.



MR. KEBLE HOWARD.
Photo. E. O. Hoppé.

MR. KEBLE HOWARD.

I think the book I most enjoyed writing was my latest, not yet published. I began it about two and a half years ago in a flood of sunshine. I knew before I began it that I had a very good story to tell, if only I could tell it. As the openingchapters rippled along, I felt I was doing justice to my story. The idea was a curiously intriguing one, with unlimited opportunity for quaint scenes, delicate characterization, and brittle dialogue. I finished the book about a year ago and it still lies on my desk, eighty thousand words strong, waiting for the days to come round again when publishing books is worth while. Perhaps it will never be published, but I enjoyed writing it—anunusualexperience, I imagine, with one's thirty-sixth book."

MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES.

I think every woman writer would agree that,

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in a sense, she had most enjoyed writing her first book. Indeed, I could go further and say that a woman's first novel is almost always her best. Even if defaced by certain serious faults—more of omission than of commission—into her first book a writer has poured a great deal of accumulated thought and experience, full of a fresh, springlike quality, difficult—nay, almost impossible—to recapture.

However, in spite of this preamble, the book I most enjoyed writing was a short novel entitled "The Uttermost Farthing." As is generally the case with all my stories, the central theme or plot remained hidden in my mind a great many years before I actually sat down to write the story. When living in early girlhood in France I had the good fortune to meet a distinguished official of the Paris Prefecture of Police, and, talking of the strange, inexplicable things that happen in life, he mentioned the disappearance of a Parisian lady who, leaving home, as her family thought, for the South of France, was finally discovered to have died in a train in Brittany — that is, hundreds of miles from the place to which she was supposed to have gone.



MR. H. A. VACHELL.
Photo. Vandyk.

The teller of this strange story did not offer any solution of the mystery. But the utterly mysterious occurrence lingered in my mind and gradually took shape in the form worked out by me in "The Uttermost Farthing." I wrote the story very quickly, and though certain passages in it were re-written again and again, as is the case with all my work, probably twenty-five thousand words out of the forty thousand words comprising the novel remain as they were first put down. My experience has always been that a dramatic scene needs less re-writing than any other kind of imaginative work, and "The Uttermost Farthing" is, in a sense, compact with drama.

This little story was the first book of mine which was really well reviewed, both in England and America. It was translated into French and into German and ran as a short serial in a Paris, a Berlin, and a Vienna daily paper. It has also had a large sale in the Tauchnitz edition, and a blind American clergyman tried to make a play of it!

MR. H. A. VACHELL.

Your question is a "corker." Have you ever asked a fond mother, with a quiverful, which of her darlings she loves best? Enjoyment includes ease of mind. Some books are born after great travail; others come easily and without pangs. Nobody can dogmatize about it. All the same, I cannot conceive certain authors getting enjoyment out of writing certain books where the theme is inevitably painful. Harland must have enjoyed writing "The Cardinal's Snuff-box," but I cannot envisage my old friend Morley Roberts chortling with glee over "Hearts of Women."

I enjoyed writing "Blinkers" because it is a romance of the preconceived idea, and preconceived ideas—which seldom pan out in practice—are very funny. I enjoyed hugely writing "Quinney's," both play and book, because the theme amused me. I have had to wrestle with other themes, dig into dull books of reference, puzzle out problems, and there is, of course, a solid satisfaction in doing this, if you do it well, but enjoyment——

It is likely that books which are a pleasure to write are also a pleasure to read. I have heard brother-scribes affirm that their best stuff has been done *au premier coup*, almost without effort. A young man sent a poem to an editor, entitled "Why do I Live?" The editor, when returning the poem, answered the question: "You live because you *sent* your poem to us instead of bringing it." But the poor fellow may have enjoyed writing it!

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The WORLD of the VANISHING POINT

by

JAMES BARR

ILLUSTRATED BY WARWICK REYNOLDS

WHEN Wilding Lear was shown into the room he found his old friend Professor Gaylor standing with his right hand resting upon a structure the use and nature of which Lear failed to guess. In shape it was like a mammoth hour-glass, beginning with a broad foundation, passing on to a wasp waist, and ending in a broad top. It stood grandfather-clock high, and on either side of it was placed a tall stool.

"My good friend, I am glad you have come."

There was a strange flicker in the gaze which the Professor bent on Wilding Lear. Wearily, a trifle nervously too, as one who is over-wrought, over-anxious, he drew the tips of his long fingers across his wrinkled forehead to rake aside the wisp of iron-grey hair which, dangling, overhung his left eye. When again he spoke it was as though for himself alone to hear.

"My four years' labour is ended. The mighty microscope stands finished."

"So that's your secret!" cried Lear, excitedly. "A microscope?"

"I have not put it to the test as yet," admitted the Professor. "I—I—I—to make a clean breast of it, I have been afraid to look into the instrument till I had someone, and that someone you, with me. Old friend, from the beginning I counted on you sharing my triumph, or comforting me in my failure."



"I am proud to stand by your side when you take your first look."

"You are to do more than just stand by my side. At precisely the same instant we two look into the microscope, to see what we shall see. To this"—he patted the top of the structure—"there are two pairs of eye-pieces, two pairs of simple plano-convex lenses—one pair for you, one for me."

"Splendid! Have you charged the microscope?"

"With a tiny drop of water dipped from a half-frozen duck-pond."

"And you expect the microscope to multiply how many times?"

Professor Gaylor threw aloft his hands in a gesture which said, "The answer to your question is beyond me."

"Indefinite millions of times," was his vocal reply. Without more said the two old friends took their places each on a tall stool and, simultaneously bending their necks, applied their eyes to the eyepieces.

An ocean, as spacious as the Pacific, and as calm. No South Sea coral isles here, however, no shimmering white sands, no luxuriant frondous growth, no lagoons resplendent in Oriental dyes. Here lay a chill, stark sea, studded with icebergs which caught the sun's rays and splintered them back to the heavens like flaming sword blades of vivid, quivering colour. The ocean itself was

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a dark, cold blue, and occupied the whole centre of the view. A swift general survey of this new world lying spread under their eyes showed the Professor and his friend Wilding Lear a dismal, stark land, apparently the beginning of a bleak continent blurred far to the west; to the south lay a great island, rough with outcrop of rocks; and far to the north, just before the ice-floes joined into a solid mass, was a cluster of black shapes, contrasting strangely with the vivid white of snow and ice. It was these the scientist and his friend first scrutinized.

"Whalers, I fancy?" exclaimed Lear, inquiringly. "Whalers entangled in the ice. Hallo, what's this?"

"What's what?" asked the Professor.

"Left middle ground. Eleven o'clock. To the right of that mighty twin iceberg. A ship's boat, unless I'm mistaken. And a man, lying asleep; or—or—can he be dead?"

The two friends riveted their gaze on the tiny craft, and were able to see into it as plainly as one who looks down from the deck of a liner into the pilot's boat alongside.

"Not dead, I think," said the Professor, confidently. "He lies too comfortably. Asleep, I judge. Shipwrecked, most likely."

As the Professor said this the sleeping man suddenly flung the blanket off him, and, jumping to his feet, stood staring in the direction of an iceberg that rode in majestic solitude a little distance off to the west. As he stood upon the thwart, rigid as a statue, the two friends scrutinized him.

"You'd swear he was a Scotch mate," vowed Lear.

The fellow's head was covered by a mass of hair in colour so violently red as to be laughable, his features were blunt, chin pronounced, mouth large but firm, his arms gorilla length and of gorilla strength, his body solid and legs violently bandy, yet giving an impression of supports worthy of the frame they carried. He slowly raised a great red freckled hairy hand, and, shading his eyes, peered keenly towards that iceberg.

"This must be an optical illusion!" muttered the Professor. "This man is surely of our own world."

"It's no illusion, no delusion," said Lear. "This vast ocean in here"—he drummed the tips of his fingers on the frame of the microscope—"with its fleets, its islands, its icebergs, is encompassed in one pin-point drop of frosted water lifted from a duck-pond. A world reposing in the heart of an atom, verily the World of the Vanishing Point."

The sailor was all-alive now. They discovered him seated on the fore thwart, pulling with all his might at the oars, while every now and again he glanced over his shoulder to assure himself that he steered a direct course for the twin iceberg, the biggest berg afloat in that thickly be-berged ocean. Intense endeavour, strain physical and mental, was writ plain on his face, and anxiety rapidly growing into terror. The muscles of his arms, his breast, his back rippled and writhed and wove like living serpents. His teeth, bared of the lips, slashed gleaming white athwart his weatherbeaten face; gleaming white, too, the foam that shouldered away from the boat as he fiercely thrust over the water. Plain that he fled from a dread. But what?

GAYLOR and Lear, abandoning the fleeing sailor, began to search the ocean for an explanation of the man's fear. They were not long in finding it.

A little to the south of the berg from which the sailor was hurrying there suddenly bobbed up from the depths the heads of a score of creatures, something like walrus; faces hatefully human-like, fringed with long, coarse beards, and hooking from the upper jaw over the lower terrible tusk-teeth, each a sabre of ivory. The creatures had ears that unfolded, once the head emerged from the water, as the wings of a bat unfold, until they stood out like quaintly-cut sails. To each point of the compass the heads of these creatures turned; the sharp red eyes scrutinizing every ripple of the ocean round about them.

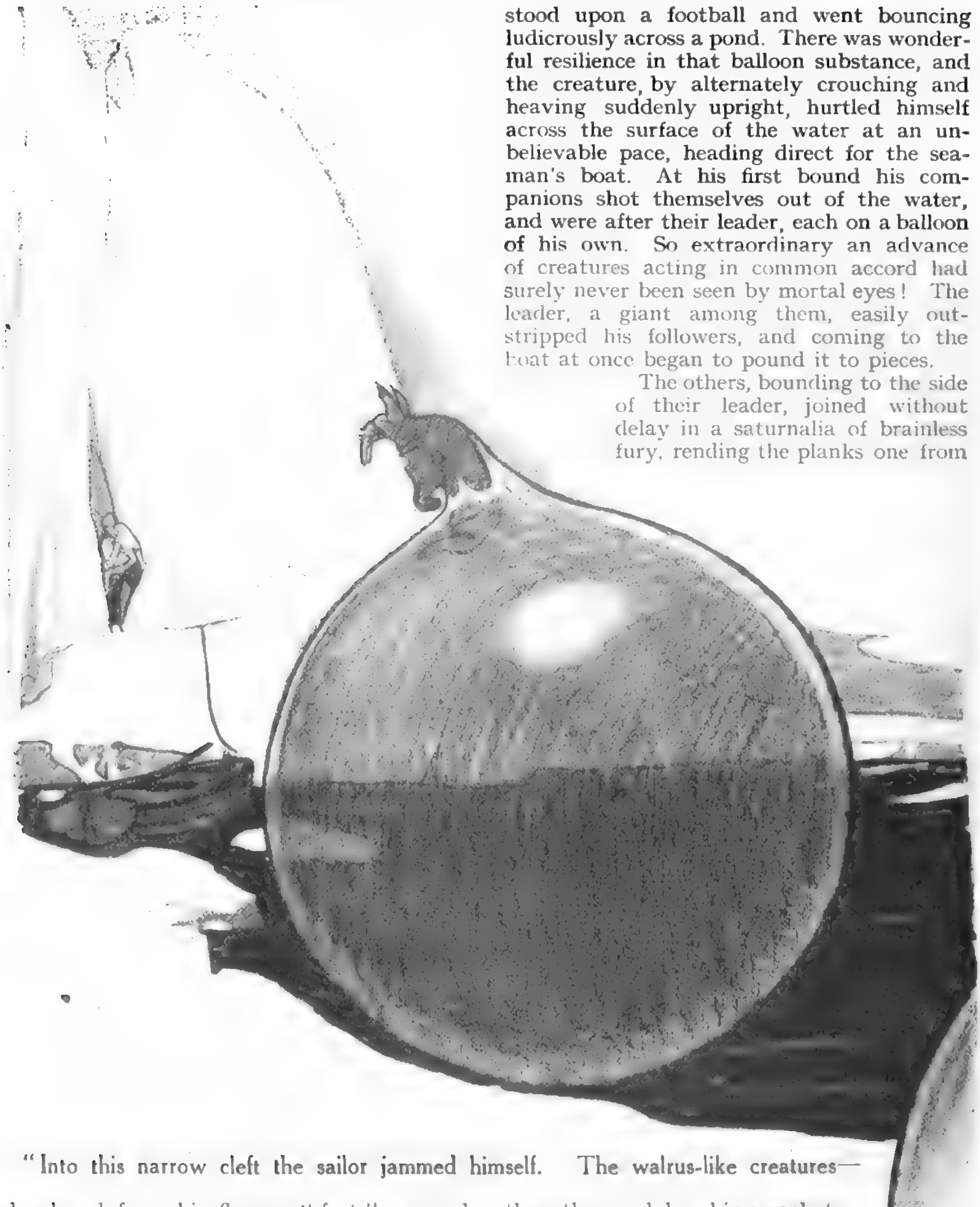
"Like bloodhounds running a fresh trail," exclaimed the Professor, in a growl. "Have they sighted the sailor?"

"Not yet, I fancy," replied Lear, his voice trembling from ill-suppressed emotion. "But it's a sure thing the sailor knows of their proximity. See! he is about to land."

The sailor thrust his boat alongside the iceberg, jumped on to a low strand-like ridge, secured the boat by placing a lump of ice on the end of the painter, then began a frantic running about, as if in search of a place where he could hide from the long-fanged monsters. The ridge on which the sailorman stood had been scored out of the solid ice by the action of the waves during the berg's long cruise from the north, and the best refuge the fugitive could discover was a narrow cleft worn deep by a runnel which trickled from the top of the berg. Into this the sailor jammed himself till he was but indifferently visible to the two scientists, who now turned their attention to the walrus-like creatures over by the second berg.

Twenty heads were abob on the ocean. Suddenly one shot high out of the water, as a porpoise shoots, but instead of returning to the deep a wonderful thing happened. While the creature was still in the air there

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"Into this narrow cleft the sailor jammed himself. The walrus-like creatures—

developed from his flapper "feet" a round balloon, perhaps one hundred feet in diameter, and this, resting on the surface of the ocean as light as a soap-bubble, balanced on its top the atrocious walrus creature as a pedestal carries a statue. A little while the creature glanced keenly about him, then, quickly lowering his shoulders, he thrust forward his ugly head and fixed his unflickering gaze on the twin iceberg. The next instant his actions caused Lear to burst into a roar of laughter. It was as if a midget stood upon a football and went bouncing ludicrously across a pond. There was wonderful resilience in that balloon substance, and the creature, by alternately crouching and heaving suddenly upright, hurtled himself across the surface of the water at an unbelievable pace, heading direct for the seaman's boat. At his first bound his companions shot themselves out of the water, and were after their leader, each on a balloon of his own. So extraordinary an advance of creatures acting in common accord had surely never been seen by mortal eyes! The leader, a giant among them, easily outstripped his followers, and coming to the boat at once began to pound it to pieces.

The others, bounding to the side of their leader, joined without delay in a saturnalia of brainless fury, rending the planks one from the other and breaking each to splinters by grasping it between their fore flappers, heaving it high overhead, and bringing it shattering down upon the edges of the ice. When they had wrecked the last plank they stood on their floating balloons in a fierce group, grinning in savage delight at their senseless destruction. The gigantic leader, at an agile bound, leapt from the water to the strand, and the instant his balloon touched the firm foundation of ice it squelched

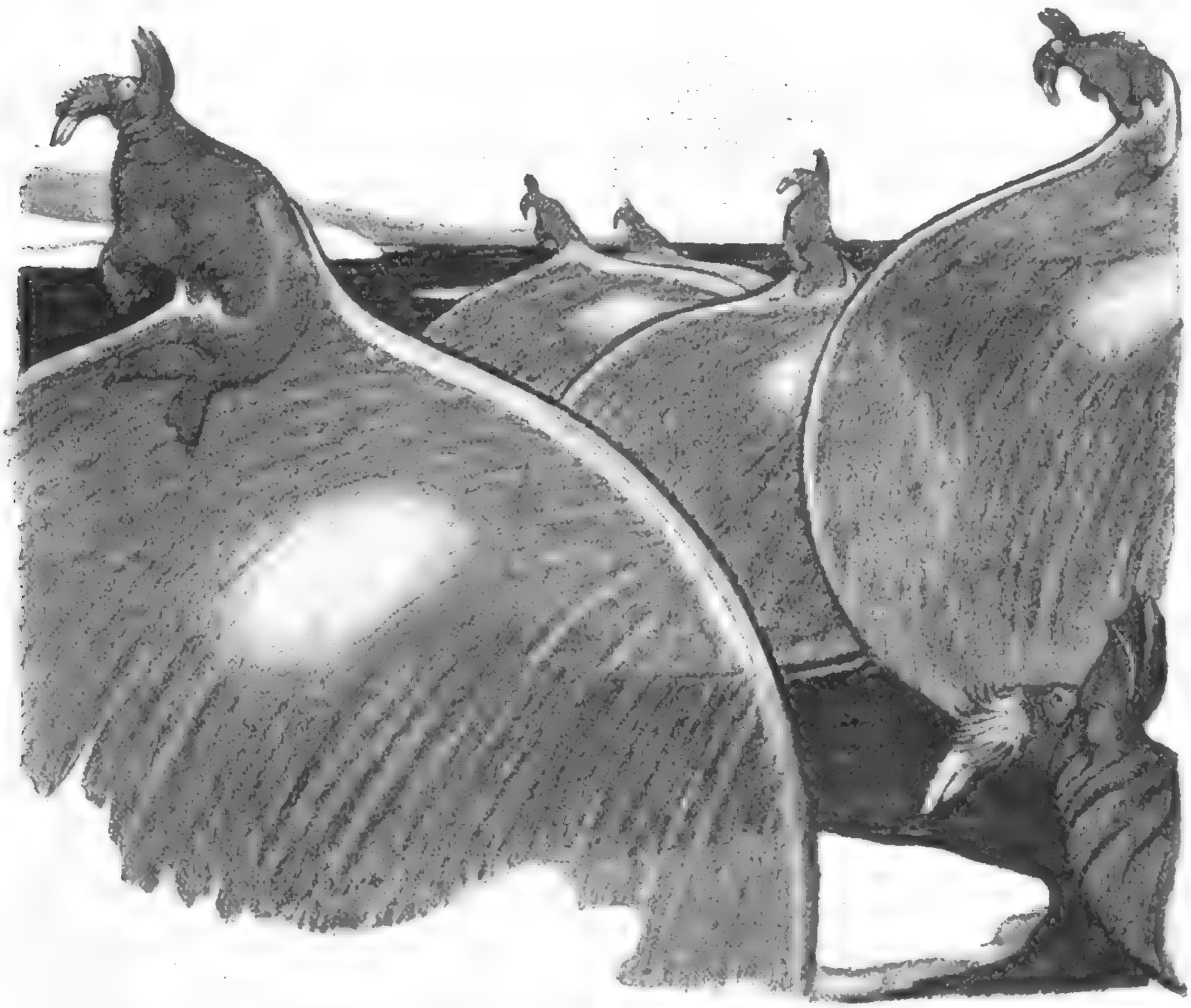
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out of existence like the snapping of a soap-bubble, leaving the uncouth creature standing upright on its hind flappers. Not a moment too soon did he leave the surface of that surly sea.

Broken off by the berg's too deep ploughing, up from depths profound, up from where in ineffable blackness and silence the blunt pronged roots of the iceberg scar and furrow the surly bed of the ocean, up and up, accumulating velocity at each foot of the thousands of feet of its course so that at last it rushed with the devastating speed of a comet—up, to burst through the ocean's surface like the explosion of a mammoth shell, came an iceberg's "calf"—five thousand tons of solid ice. Right underneath the walrus host this giant "calf" burst forth into the air, smiting the sea into a raging turmoil and flinging the cruel creatures, spreadeagled, sprawling, spiralling, up to the height of the berg's highest pinnacle; then back the "calf" fell smashing once more into the sea. The ocean by the side of the berg fell into chaotic agitation, raging, tearing, roaring, heaving like a maelstrom. Masses of ice ground and smashed one another to slush, and into this devastating turmoil the company of fierce walrus creatures fell back, to be battered to shapeless masses, some to be sucked down to depths unfathomed, others to be thrown like dead fish upon the shelving shore of the twin berg.

The giant leader, at the first upburst of the "calf," acted quick as thought. He hurled himself headlong into the sea and disappeared like a sounding whale, burying himself fathoms deep, and, swimming with all his strength, shot up to the surface two hundred yards away from the turmoil of the waters. Refilling his balloon, he stood staring towards the berg till the raging waters died down; then he bounded back. As he approached his dead followers lying on the ice a grin as of savage delight caused his face to break into an ugly ripple of wrinkles, and, acting



—by alternately crouching and heaving suddenly upright, hurtled themselves across the surface of the water, heading direct for the seaman's boat."

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as if he enjoyed the business, he vigorously began to kick their bodies into the sea.

" The grimness of him, the ruthlessness of him ! " exclaimed Lear, throwing back his head and blinking his eyes to rest them. " He is more callous than brute beast."

Professor Gaylor, following his friend's lead, sighed :—

" I—I had forgotten it is not real. I had forgotten I was looking into a microscope."

" There's no doubt about the reality of it," asserted Lear. " The beast is there, as that sailor will find unless I'm mightily mistaken."

Lear was not mistaken. When the two scientists again applied their eyes the creature had forgotten its slaughtered followers and stood intensely taut and intent, listening.

" Foolish fellow ! " exclaimed Lear. " Why does he not wait till the beast goes away ? "

The " calf's " great billow, flung sweeping along the strand of ice, had inundated the sailor's hide-hole, half drowning him, but the narrowness of the niche prevented the water from washing him out into the ocean. When the waters subsided the red-headed man scrambled to his feet, and was now furiously hacking at the face of the ice with his sheath-knife.

" The fear of the beast has shifted his mental balance," exclaimed Gaylor. " He digs his knife senselessly into the unresponding berg."

" There's method in his madness," contradicted Lear. " Unless I'm a Dutchman, he's endeavouring to hew steps up that sloping crevice, so that he may escape on to the plateau higher up the berg. What's this ? "

LEAR'S cry caused the Professor to glance at the plateau high above the one on which the sailorman and monster stood, and a wonderful sight met him. Out from a narrow flaw in the side of the berg, advancing with the utmost caution, a girl emerged, her head bare. And what a beautiful head, to be sure ! Crowned by an abundance of hair that billowed and braided, tumbled and twisted in all dazzling shades of gold, hair as of spun sunshine which formed a scintillating setting for a face too dazzling for the eyes of mortal to look upon without ecstasy. The forehead was of the purest ivory, the cheeks of a delicate pink, the eyes flashed liquid fire, the teeth were like pearls. The scientists, at first glimpse of the perfect face, drew in their breath with a gasp, their hearts began to run with the rub-a-dub of a kettle-drum.

A little while the girl paused, too timorous to venture boldly out from the safety of her home in the ice ; her eyes were expressive of surprise, so that the Professor and his friend believed that she, like the ugly monster, heard the " jab-jab " of the sailor's knife against the ice without being able to guess what it could be that set the noise a-wing. At length the girl did venture fully forth, and poised a-tiptoe upon the plateau towards which the sailor hacked his way. So ethereal a creature was she that the colour-flames flung from the ice appeared to strike through her ; a being as if created of gossamer, delicately, exquisitely modelled and as airy as a thistledown, a veritable nereid of the immaculate ice ! The radiant girl, still a-tiptoe, ventured forward and stood quiveringly vital, finger to lips, head inclined, and she listened intently. In a little while, out from the same aperture in the ice came forth, as palpitating, as hesitatingly as their leader, a troop of girls, each one as beautiful as the first, round whom they now clustered in anxious wonderment.

The red-headed, be-freckled, coarse-handed sailorman continued viciously to stab the knife into the ice ; the loathly walrus stood still in indecision as to the direction of the sounds.

Presently the arms and sides of the ice-nereid queen began to quiver, and, as a new-born dragon-fly first unfurls its wings, two resplendent wings of many-coloured gauze fluttered forth to shake free their outer limits, and gradually the wings grew greater and greater, until they reached from the girl's feet to quiver far above her head. With a resilient upspring she now launched herself into the air, and with her radiant wings beating at such a rate that they shone all around her, like a heat-haze of brilliant tints, she darted from the berg and out over the sea, where, poising as a humming-bird poises before entering the bell of a flower, she took a keen general survey of the iceberg.

Strangely enough, perhaps because of the noise made by his knife on the ice, it was the sailor who first attracted her notice, and, curiosity overcoming timidity, she ventured forward in tentative, tiny spurts, her whole being a-flutter from apprehension, which, however, was not strong enough to defeat the delightful inquisitiveness of her sex. Nearer and nearer she approached, all her wits centred on the strange being who, quite unaware of her presence, hacked hard at the ice.

" My girl, look out ! " suddenly barked Lear, in a voice ringing with alarm and horror.

The Professor's face blanched, for at Lear's cry he realized the pinch of the danger into which the timorous, delicate fairy-girl was advancing.

Beneath her the gruesome walrus creature had dropped into the sea, and now crouched on his inflated balloon. When the girl poised almost directly above him the monster bounded

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"Beneath her the gruesome walrus creature now crouched on his inflated balloon, his sabre-teeth ready to slash."

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into the air, his face turned skyward and his sabre-teeth ready to slash.

At the very instant in which the balloon was well clear of the water the girl caught a glimpse of the beast projecting himself into the air with the velocity of a flung spear, straight for her. Quick as thought she acted. She was not so foolish as to try to fly higher, for to get momentum to mount takes time; she could not dart forward for fear of dashing her head against the berg; she dared not drop, for to do so would be to project herself between the horror's jaws. Seizing her only chance, the girl began to fling herself sideways and to roll over and over, folding her wings as she went so that they might not impede her gyrations. Not a fraction of a second was lost in hesitation. Yet she could not propel herself quite out of harm's way, nor furl her wings in time. The black beast, coming nearly on a level with the fragile girl, and seeing her all but out of his reach, slashed one swift slash on chance, and a tusk cut clean as a knife through the delicate gauze of her left wing. A second time he slashed with fierce velocity, this time missing by the fraction of an inch. However, already the damage was done. Her right wing expanded full and a-quiver of life, but her left drooped hapless as the sail of a ship in the doldrums. The beautiful being's face, hitherto so pink and sentient, went deadly pale as, in spite of the frantic beating of her uninjured wing, she began to flutter helplessly down towards the water, where already the beast, having deflated his balloon, was bobbing about, his body submerged, his head and shoulders in the air, waiting for his fragile victim to sink into his grim jaws.

PROFESSOR GAYLOR, as though stung by a hornet, jerked his head away from the microscope, and began to stride the room in anguish.

"It is beyond me to witness such a horror!" he barked. "How did I dare create this terror-revealing microscope?"

A shout from Lear, however, brought him hurrying back; again he glued his eyes to the eyepiece, and with his heart all the while beating and bumping from excitement, he beheld a display of affection on the one side and savagery on the other the like of which mortal eyes had seldom witnessed. The beautiful girl's companions suddenly came flying forth in a daring bunch, they surrounded their stricken leader, taking hold of her by the arms, the legs, the wings, the neck, the very hair of her golden head, and, while their wings beat the air more rapidly than ever humming-bird's vibrated, they managed, but only just, to keep the girl from sinking any lower, at the same time, little by little, inch by inch, they edged her ever nearer and nearer to the iceberg.

At the first sign of this attempted rescue the walrus beast flew into a veritable frenzy of savagery. He inflated his balloon and began to bounce furiously into the air and striking right and left at the swarm of fragile creatures that hovered just out of his reach. In his highest bound he met with luck, but only with a little, for he managed to slice a cut in the foot of one of the girls who was flying the lowest of the lot. She, plucky, pretty thing, carried on as though she were not wounded, purring her wings with the best of them, and never giving the least indication of relinquishing or desiring to relinquish her share in the saving of her leader.

"Why does not the monster bounce upon the strand?" cried the Professor. 'From its elevation he could not fail to reach them."

"His balloon is too tender for the ice," replied Lear, impatiently.

Frantically the walrus beast hurtled into the air, but fortune was not with him, for the girls, with a final burst of energy, shot their wounded sister on to the ledge quite out of harm's way; then all flung themselves down and writhed in the throes of utter exhaustion.

"They've saved her!" cried the Professor, as much in relief as in triumph. "Every one of them deserves the Victoria Cross."

"If only the sailorman can now hack his way to that same ledge, I'll breathe again," admitted Lear, with a sigh.

The Professor and his friend glanced to see what had become of the sailor, and found his red head protruding from the crevice, his eyes staring in fear and awe at having witnessed the life-and-death struggle. Abruptly he hurried back into his niche and began to hack away with redoubled energy. The walrus creature was paying no attention to the noise; he still continued to bound high in the air, apparently for no purpose than to catch a greedy glimpse of the girls who had escaped his murderous fangs. A little while passed before the girls one by one got upon their feet. With the utmost gentleness they assisted their leader and the other wounded one into the ice cave.

Professor Gaylor and his friend took a breather. Their eyes were strained, their brains required clarifying, their nerves, taut for minutes, needed easing up. Together they took a few turns of the room, by which time their sight and emotions had become more nearly normal.

It was as well the men resumed their watch at the moment they did, for otherwise they might not have been able to understand the goings-on.

The walrus horror had ceased to bounce;

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once more he stood on the ice-strand, listening. The sailorman was driving in the blade of his knife, chipping off lumps of ice, which fell to his feet like splintered diamonds, and already he had fashioned in the ice three steps on the slope, upon the second of which he stood to carve a fourth. Presently the walrus, advancing soft of tread, passed along, scrutinizing the face of the berg until he came to the crevice wherein was the sailor. He peered in. On seeing the man his lips curled in a savage snarl, and although the place was much too narrow to admit his bulk, he wasted some little time in futile attempts to squeeze himself in. Defeated, he raised himself to his full height, then with those strong ivory tusks of his he began to slash at the ice at a spot some distance above the sailorman's head. No one who saw him could doubt that the creature's intention was to hack out an opening, so as to cut the poor sailorman off from reaching the plateau of safety. At every slash of the tusks chunks and splinters of ice flew. The sailorman, hearing the noise, glanced up, and the sight he beheld crashed upon his brain with such force that he lost grip of fingers and toes and fell in a heap to the bottom of the crevice. A moment only he lay, then he sprang to his feet, scaled the steps, and fell furiously to work again.

Although the scientists could not hear the faintest indication of a sound, yet they did not doubt that there, in that weird world of the vanishing point, the labours of the sailor and the beast must resound with great noise, and this fact was impressed stronger on them when they beheld the troop of fairy-girls cautiously steal out from their home in the ice as if to investigate a noise. To lend each other courage they joined hands, and tiptoeing to the edge of their plateau they peered over. When they saw the furious activity of the beast they scudded back, and stood each with her hands pressed to her bosom, staring in quick alarm the one at the other.

On a sudden they all started to gesticulate —all but one. This one—she was slightly taller than her sisters—very soberly began to unfold her gossamer filament wings even while her sisters, laying gentle restraining hands on her, appeared to be imploring her not to put into action some intention she had announced to them. But the girl, gently too, lifted their hands from off her shoulders, smiled on each one of them in turn, and, spreading her wings, fluttered up and up and up until she overtopped the peak of the towering berg, when she volleyed herself with the speed of an arrow straight into the west. The scientists followed her with their eyes until she blurred into a sort of mist.

Returning to the iceberg, the men saw quite a different send-off. Another girl, one of the tiniest of the lot, was opening her wings, to the applause of her sisters, who all danced about her encouragingly. This girl did not need to beat her way up and over the berg, but flew straight out over the ocean, heading due north. The others, springing into the air, escorted her a little distance on her way, and on returning poured into their ice-home, perhaps to report to their wounded leader. A little while later this second girl blurred out of vision as the first had done, allowing the spectators to shift their eyes to the berg again.

The sailorman had just finished his fourth step and now hacked at his fifth. The walrus monster, working more furiously than ever, caused the chips and splinters of ice to fly as a planing machine flings from it the short shavings of an oak plank. Even in the short spell he had axed out a big cavity over the sailor's head.

TIME passed. Every now and again a couple of fairy-girls hand-in-hand would tip-toe out of the translucent ice for an instant or so to peer over the brink of their plateau at the man and the monster; then to scud back, as if to report progress to their queen. They were in great trepidation.

Again the scientists rested their eyes.

"The sailor is a gone coon, I fear," sighed Wilding Lear. "The brute is heading him off easily. He's doomed."

"I can't bear to think of him losing," said the Professor. "To see a living being fighting for life, and fighting a losing fight, is more than my nerves can stand. If this poor fellow is fated to lose, I would bite my thumb off rather than be a witness to his defeat."

When the two resumed their watch nothing of great moment had happened. The sailor still hacked, the monster still rended. One of the girls was just emerging from the ice; she spread her iridescent wings, mounted and spiralled up as if reconnoitring the far distance, then, fluttering down, she seemed to call in to the others. Out a bevy of them came and, launching themselves into the air, they poised like a group of glittering angels a little distance from the berg.

"What's this approaching?" sang out Lear. "There, to the west!"

A dim black blotch in the sky caught the Professor's eye. It was rapidly emerging from a nebulous to a concrete form as it hurtled more and more into focus.

"A flying thing of sorts," ejaculated Gaylor, eagerly.

The fairy-girls had fallen into extreme agitation. The smaller and more fragile of them were urged home to the iceberg, and scurried out of sight as schoolgirls run from a wolf; the stronger spread themselves out

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to either hand and some mounted higher. Soon the flying thing from the west became much more distinct, and its flight was found to be mightily erratic. It shot up, it dived down, it flung clumsy, heavy lurches to one side, then to the other, and, indeed, seemed incapable of flying straight.

"It pursues!" cried Lear, whose eyes were sharper than Gaylor's. "And, yes, the winged girl!"

She was so tiny, so indefinite compared with the big black blotch, that for a while Gaylor failed to detect her as she darted through the air. And in that air she played as eccentric as a minnow in a stream, doubling, twisting, tumbling, turning, but ever hurtling herself on towards the iceberg, towards home, towards safety; all the while closely pursued by a monster flying thing, black as a crow, with a head like a griffin and long legs ending in talons of horn to equal the walrus creature's tusks. At every dart and twist of the girl the black vampire twisted too, uncouth but wonderfully agile, and with one or other of its talon-claws struck at the fragile, gossamer creature a stroke that, had it so much as touched her, would have impaled its victim past all escape. But the dauntless creature of light and colour and gauze, although palpably in the pangs of terror and exhaustion, nimbly evaded each blow, if only by a hair's-breadth, and came tumbling on.

Presently the whole bevy of iridescent girls poising there over the blue waters, glittering in the sun like a handful of up-flung chaff, awoke to activity, and flew sure and swift as arrows direct for the black vampire's head, cutting in between their now distressed sister and the ugly thing of prey. This vampire darted hither and thither, bewildered by the multitude, and the girls, one by one taking the post of danger, flashed before the winged vampire's eyes erratic as a reflection flung by a shaking mirror, causing the creature to lose sight of its original quarry and at every turn to take on the new one. Lear laughed with delight when he saw the game. The exhausted girl, now freed from pursuit, hurried direct to the iceberg and staggered panting into the icy doorway, while her sisters continued to tumble and twist and turn, now stopping dead, now spiralling, spinning, diving, glancing off as though ricochetting on the air, yet all the time tempting the grizzly black thing ever on towards the twin berg.

'Now we shall see fur fly!" exclaimed Lear. "The plucky little souls are leading one horror to combat with another."

HE spoke true. Having enticed the black-winged creature immediately over the spot where the walrus quarried at the ice, the girls, at a reckless spurt, shot themselves headlong into the crevice and alighted at the very feet of the sailorman. The next instant down thundered the black vampire, out raked its terrible talons, home they struck with deadly certainty deep into the shoulders of the walrus monster; then, the huge wings laboriously, furiously flapping, up off the ice was hoisted the astonished walrus.

Taken completely by surprise, the beast hung limp for a moment, when, flying into a flurry of savagery, it began to squirm and double, lithe as an impaled otter. It threw back its ivory tusks and struck with tremendous force straight at the breast of the vampire. When the blow hit home the vampire flung its wings wide, ceasing to beat the air, and for a second it looked as though the two were about to fall down into the ocean, but once again, and this time more frantic than ever, those huge wings of tough black hide thundered in the air. Higher and ever higher those wings careered, and all the while the vampire and the walrus monster fought with tooth, tusk, and claw. Fur was flying like chaff in a whirlwind, great tufts of it were torn off from both combatants, and patches of hide as well, for the vampire was as devoid of feather and as well clothed in fur as the walrus creature itself.

Up upon the higher plateau of the ice, to look on at the gigantic battle, now fluttered the girls, big and little, young and old, and out to stand in their midst came their beautiful queen, whose wounded wing was bound neatly to her side. Out from the crevice crept the red-headed sailorman to turn his befreckled face skyward to watch the furious battle in the air, a battle that ever receded from him higher and higher. In strength the two creatures were evenly matched; in tenacity, in savagery, in weapons of offence; but the vampire, having its adversary in an unfamiliar medium, the air, held what at first seemed an advantage. Yet was it really an advantage? If the walrus had been on ice the vampire could have made free use of its terrible talons, to strike and to tear, but up here in the very blue of the sky it felt itself compelled to hang hold of its prey and to fight with its terrible jaws. It drove its claws deeper and deeper into the walrus creature, and struck its horny head with the crash of a steam-hammer smashing on the head of its foe, who, in his turn, stabbed and slashed with sabre-tusks, ripping a mighty gash at every blow. From each creature blood flowed freely. Plainly the fight up in the vault of heaven could not last much longer; plainly, too, it was a death-fight.

At length the altitude limit was reached. The vampire could mount no higher. The fierceness of the fight, the hurt of the wounds,

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"The next instant down thundered the black vampire, out raked its terrible talons, home they struck deep into the shoulders of the walrus monster."

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the loss of blood and the weight of its burden, brought the skinny, horny, flying creature to a stop while still its leather wings furiously beat upon the air. Then suddenly the wings, which, heretofore so masterful, had buoyed up the battlers, drooped with the pathetic limpness of a cut flower that has exhausted its water, and, lurching sideways, the vampire began to fall.

The walrus, sensing victory, struck more furiously vigorous than ever before. The vampire, reviving and not to be outdone, drove its vicious jaws in deep, and renewing its strength moment by moment it began tearing out and redigging in its mighty claws. Over and over in deadly embrace the two tumbled in a wild chaotic descent, a descent that became faster and faster at every turn. The scientists, holding their breath, saw the girls dash scurrying for the protection of the ice, they saw the sailorman cower back into his crevice. Still locked in the embrace of hate the two monsters, with the velocity of a crumpled aeroplane, hurtled through the air and in their descent first struck upon the side of the iceberg a glancing blow, then in a vast bound they shot down to the surface of the sea and there they lay, mangled, broken, their wide-open eyes filmed over in death. Only for a little while the waves toyed with them, slowly swirling them around as to the touch of a gentle maelstrom, then, with startling suddenness, engulfed them into the depths.

PROFESSOR GAYLOR jumped from the high stool to the floor, his parchment cheeks wrinkled in the first smile that had come to him since the waters of the strange ocean were spread out to his gaze. Lear followed, radiant. His delight that the girls should have risked their lives to save the life of a shipwrecked sailor was unbounded.

"Noble creatures!" he kept exclaiming as he rubbed his hands together in glee. "Noble creatures! Plucky souls, frail and beautiful as butterflies, yet lion brave. At the risk of their own lives they saved the life of a common sailor."

A full five minutes passed before the friends remounted to their high stools, and when they peered through the eyepieces the sight that greeted them was one to warm the cockles of their heart. The sylph girls stood together in a glittering group each in the act of shaking free her wings to hover over the berg, when to them flew the tiny sister who had sped off to the north just before the coming of the vampire. This sibyl pointed towards the quarter whence she came, and the scientists beheld a clumsy, sturdy whaling ship holding soberly over the waves, curtsying and yawing a ponderous course straight for the iceberg.

"A rescue ship!" cried Lear, in delight. "I guessed as much."

Down from their plateau on to the lower strand the fragile creatures now fluttered one by one, each a link in surely the loveliest "ladies' chain" mortal eyes had ever danced to behold, and out from his crevice they beckoned the brawny, be-freckled sailorman. He came forth willingly. Using him as morris-dancers use a maypole the girls joined hands and began, light, nimble as fairy folk, to circle around him, slowly, sedately at first, but each succeeding encircling increased in zest and spin. Round and around they tiptoed, so that the motion grew into a dizzy whirl; on and on, still faster and faster, they spun, till at length individual form became merged into a whirling band, and the red-headed sailorman, a mighty grin on his freckled face, stood encompassed, Saturn-like, by a zone of dazzling, dancing, flashing colour, a zone for ever weaving and blending in inspiring harmonies to out-bedazzle the splendour of a rainbow's proud-flung arch. A new light now pervaded the world of the vanishing point, a light as of the aurora borealis, deep-dyed, resplendent; and this light, striking down upon the face of the waters, kindled into diamond flames each mighty berg till it glowed and scintillated with ardent fires. The vast ocean lay an enamel of dark blue studded with brilliant gems.

The scientists stared, fascinated. The old whaler came alongside the twin iceberg. The radiant dance died down; the sailorman was rowed aboard, and the girls, having waved a merry good-bye, tripped one by one into their ice palace. Darkness snuggled down upon the world of the vanishing point.

"BEFORE evaporation wrecks the wonderful world we have been permitted to peep into, let us replace the drop of water in the duckpond," said Wilding Lear, speaking under his breath, for the awe of the infinitely large in the infinitely small lay heavy upon his soul.

Professor Gaylor, his fingers a-tremble in his eagerness not to lose a moment, handed out to Lear the glasses between which lay the tiny film of duck-pond water.

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VARIATIONS

on a personal theme

by

LANDON RONALD

Illustrated by Bert Thomas.

VARIATION V

In the Theatre.

FEW musicians have, I suppose, had more varied experience with the theatrical profession than I have had. Indeed, the first fifteen years of my career were passed within the four walls of a theatre. First came " L'Enfant Prodigue," as I have told in another chapter. Then followed several tours as conductor with comic operas under the management of Horace Sedger and William Greet. After that I went to Sir Augustus Harris, and was conducting English opera at Drury Lane and Italian opera on tour when Mr. Tom B. Davis got the lease of the Lyric Theatre and engaged me to conduct his comic opera productions there. I stayed with him for some years, and I look back upon that engagement with the greatest possible pleasure, as he was always kindness itself and always made me feel that I ought to be doing much better and higher class work. He is a man who always says very bluntly exactly what he means, and therefore those who work under him generally know exactly where they are. As an instance, I remember when he was managing director of the Theatre Royal, Birmingham, that some little official, who was a local man, was continually making futile suggestions as to how the theatre should be run. I was present on one of these occasions, when Mr. Davis turned round very abruptly to the young man and said, " Now, look here, Mr. So-and-so; *your* ideas may be very good, but I prefer my own; so with your permission we will keep to them, and pray don't worry yourself any further, or you may get brain fever ! "

ONE other incident comes to my mind. It was during the run of " Floradora." Mr. Davis had a habit of coming on the stage after the performance to discuss matters with myself and the stage manager, and there was one particular actress in the theatre who always rushed up to him most gushingly and inquired how his " *dear wife* " was, or she hoped " *dear Mrs. Davis* " was well. He hated gush of any kind, and whispered to me, " I know I shall be very rude to that lady one night if she continually bombards me with questions about my wife's health." The night, alas, arrived ! Mr. Davis came on the stage as usual and was inclined to be irritable and bad-tempered. Up rushed the lady in her most gushing manner, seized him by the arm, and said, " And how is *dear Mrs. Davis?* " He replied, in an acrid tone of voice and with an expression on his face quite indescribable unless you know the man, " Now, Miss S——, *my wife is very well.* When she is ill, I will let you know; it will save us a lot of trouble ! "

He lent me for a few months to Marie Tempest, when she made her *début* as a serious actress in " Nell Gwynne " at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, and I produced Edward German's charming music to that play. This she followed with " Masks and Faces " by her husband, Cosmo Gordon Lennox, for which I wrote the incidental music. After this I returned to my former post to conduct " Floradora " and to produce " The Silver Slipper." It was at the end of the run of the latter piece that I determined to give up conducting in a theatre for once and for always, and turned my attention seriously to concert conducting. Nothing has ever tempted me to return to the theatre either for grand or comic opera, although I have had many tempting offers. This has not prevented me from writing or arranging or producing incidental music on several occasions during the last few years. Two such events stand out clearly in my memory. The first, the production of Gabriel Fauré's beautiful music to Forbes-Robertson's " Pelleas and Melisande " at the Prince of Wales's Theatre; the second, arranging some of Beethoven's music to Tree's production of the play called " Beethoven.'

I consider that when Johnston Forbes-

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Robertson thought fit to retire from the stage this country lost the greatest tragedian of our generation. Apart from his wonderful histrionic gifts, he was one of the gentlest, dearest creatures in the world with whom to work. I thoroughly enjoyed my few weeks with him during the run of "Pelleas and Melisande." Maeterlinck was then caviare to the multitude, and the experiment was a very risky one financially. The cast was a superb one, Mrs. Patrick Campbell playing Melisande, Martin Harvey Pelleas, and Forbes-Robertson Goliaud. Ian Robertson (Johnston's brother) produced the play, and, as I have said, Gabriel Fauré (the late Directeur of the Paris Conservatoire) wrote some beautiful incidental music, and I conducted. The play was only done at *matinées*, and as far as I can remember was not more than a *succés d'estime*.

A similar fate awaited Tree's production of "Beethoven," which Louis N. Parker had translated from the French. Tree asked me to go and see him. He told me quite frankly that he had already approached Richter, but that he had refused the offer, so I was offered the job. It appealed to me, and I put my heart and soul into it. For three weeks I had to pass my life at His Majesty's Theatre, and it was during this period that I got to know Herbert Tree really well. I found him a man of infinite charm, infinite pose (which had become almost second nature to him), and infinite kindliness of heart. He was often intensely irritating in the theatre, and at times I found him specially difficult owing to his amazing ignorance of music. I remember I had taken the first few bars of the divine Andante movement from the Ninth Symphony to accompany a certain touching speech in the play. He stopped me in the middle of it, complaining that the orchestra was too loud. I got it to play pianissimo. He stopped us again. He didn't like the clarionet. I pointed out that it was *a flute* and that it happened to be Beethoven's own scoring, and that I was not prepared to alter it. It was all no good. He said he didn't like or approve of the scoring and wanted it out. I kept to my guns and refused, beginning to feel that I simply could not stand such ridiculous criticism. And herein came his sensitiveness! In two minutes he had come round to me, laying his hand kindly on my shoulder, saying, "My dear Ronald, how thoughtless I am! Here you've been rehearsing for four hours and had nothing to eat or drink. I've sent at once for some sandwiches and half a pint of champagne for you. That'll put you right." I thanked him cordially and was really touched by his kindness, but whispered to him, "It's just like you—but the flute must remain in!" And it did!

HE got the better of me, however, the following week. He asked me one night to supper in the Dome, and we were talking about the piece and the music, when he suddenly said, "Ronald, as Beethoven dies and the curtain falls, I want the orchestra to play the Ninth Symphony!" He gave forth this dictum with a magnificent gesture, worthy of Svengali. I am perfectly convinced that he had not the remotest idea what a Symphony was, and that he had confused the term with the introductory bars or "symphony" to a song. However, I answered him perfectly seriously, but perhaps with a glint in my eyes, "A capital idea, my dear Tree, a great idea! But I am only wondering whether the audience will remain seated for an hour after the end of the piece, and also whether you will mind paying a chorus of at least fifty or sixty people to sing when the play is over." He asked me what I meant by "an hour," and I explained to him that that was the length of the work. He said he had forgotten that, but I knew that he had never known it! A pause ensued, and after a little deliberation he said, "Can you do an excerpt from the choral part?" I told him it was possible, but I pointed out the expense. This was the last thing he considered, and it was there and then arranged that a chorus should be engaged and trained, and that the orchestra should play on the stage just for five minutes. The effect was most dramatic, and his suggestion proved to be right.

His sense of humour was a joy, and he was extremely fond of bringing out aphorisms of an amusing kind. There are so many stories connected with his name, which have been told over every dinner-table and printed in every paper, that to attempt to tell a new one would almost savour of impertinence. But the following anecdote, if not new, has, as far as I know, never appeared in print, and with many apologies to those to whom it may be a "chestnut," I venture to tell it now. As far as I can remember, it was just about this period that Signor Grassi, the great Sicilian tragedian, visited this country and gave a season at the Garrick Theatre. Tree, as the acknowledged "head" of the profession, thought it would be a nice compliment to Grassi to give him a supper in the Dome of His Majesty's Theatre. The date was arranged, and about fifteen or twenty of the best-known "lights" in the fine arts and science were duly invited to meet the great Sicilian. The party was in every way a success, and in a happy and graceful extempore speech Tree bid Signor Grassi a hearty welcome. It was getting very late, and about two o'clock or half-past two Grassi (who had had considerably more champagne than was good for him) made a

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"Without the slightest warning he flung both arms round Tree and kissed him fervently on both cheeks."

move to go. Everybody at once rose to their feet, and Grassi (in true Sicilian fashion) began making his adieux by kissing everyone on both cheeks with great warmth. A look of horror came over Tree's face as he edged away from his guest, murmuring to Cecil King, his stage manager, "Take him down in the lift, and I'll walk down. *I will not be kissed by Grassi.*" After some difficulty a hansom cab was obtained for the purpose of taking Grassi home, and Tree was waiting to help him in, when, without the slightest warning, he flung both arms round Tree and kissed him fervently on both cheeks! Tree's expression was a study! He succeeded in controlling his feelings, however, and asked his guest politely and frigidly where he lived, so that he might direct the cabman. This seemed to puzzle Grassi. As a matter of fact, it leaked out afterwards that he was staying in some very shabby apartments in a very shabby street in Soho with a Sicilian ice-cream merchant, a friend of his youth. After some hesitation, Grassi replied, "If you pleece, ask him to take me Garrrrick Teatro." Tree, addressing the cabman, said, "Take this gentleman to the Garrick Theatre." The cabman looked down scornfully, and asked, "What the blankety blank does 'e want to go to the Garrick Feater for at this time o' night?" "I don't know," was Tree's quick rejoinder, "but I should think he has forgotten to kiss the fireman!"

My latest connection with the theatre has been with my old friends Arthur Collins and Alfred Butt, for their production of "The Garden of Allah." When Arthur Collins wrote to me and asked me to write the incidental music for this play it appealed to me greatly and brought back many memories. I have already shown how much Arthur Collins was connected with my youthful days. The same remark applies to Robert Hichens, the author of the book, who, as I have said elsewhere, was a fellow-student of mine at the Royal College of Music, and used to bring me lyrics and ask me to set them to music, when we were both youngsters.

Sir Alfred Butt I used to know when he occupied a very small position in the office of the Palace Theatre. He and the acting manager at that period used to lunch every day at the Trocadero, where I always joined them, and it was a serious point when it came for us to toss who should pay for coffee, because neither Butt nor myself could really afford it.

It was therefore with no ordinary feelings that I once again found myself associated with Collins, Hichens, and Butt, all of whom I have known for over twenty-five years.

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Needless to say the association proved of the pleasantest, and my work for 'The Garden of Allah"—which, incidentally, I consider is some of the best music I have ever written—was nothing but a pleasure from the moment I undertook it. I promised Collins to conduct the first night. Afterwards I wished I hadn't! It will be remembered by many that the great scene of the play is a sand-storm. I shall never forget its effect on the first night! When it was all over and the lights went up, I found to my horror that I was completely covered in sand from head to foot. I looked round, to find the dress-coats of the men in the orchestra also covered with it. Some wag (as a matter of fact, I believe it was that wicked fellow Herman Finck) wrote to Sir Alexander Mackenzie: "Have you heard about *Sand-on* Ronald the first night at Drury Lane?" Such outrageous jokes should be punishable by law!

VARIATION VI.

Potpourri

I HAVE often been asked who I consider was the greatest conductor. The question always reminds me of the story of the lady who asked Liszt what he thought of Thalberg. Liszt replied: "He is the king of pianists." "But, Master," rejoined the gushing damsel, "what of yourself?" "I am the only pianist in the world," said Liszt. Without in any way wishing to infer that I am emulating Liszt, my reply to the question about conductors is, and always has been, "Nikisch is the king of conductors." As such he appeals to me. In private life he is really charming. He possesses the most delightful speaking voice, perfect manners, great understanding, and sympathy. He is a good *raconteur*, and told me a story of an unrehearsed incident which took place when he was conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Paderewski was to make his first appearance on this particular occasion, and at rehearsal the orchestra gave him an overpowering reception. One of the 'cellists became very excited, and stood up and made a little speech. This was an unheard-of breach of etiquette. But no cries of "Order" or "Sit down" had any effect upon him. It turned out that he was a Pole. He ended his oration, glowing with patriotic pride, thus: "You see there Paderewski—my countryman—a Pole—(*crescendo*). He is like Cæsar—(*fortissimo*) 'He came, he saw, he *inquired*'"!

. . . . . .

I have known John Drinkwater for close on twenty years. I knew him when he lived in a tiny little house just outside Birmingham, and when he used to pay his shilling to come and listen to my Promenade Concerts there. He was a great enthusiast on music in those days, and was a bit of a dreamer and much of a poet. Not a great deal of his work had been published then, but that which had appeared made its impression in the right quarter, though I remember it being criticized as being rather involved. I felt and knew that he would make a great name for himself, and always told him so. In 1908 a little book of poems by him was published by the Samurai Press entitled "Lyrical and Other Poems," and he sent me a copy, with a charming dedication. Imagine my pleasure when I found that one of them was written about myself. I don't think the book ever had much success, although there is some splendid poetry in it. I am so very proud of the one he wrote about me, that, without asking the permission of his publisher or himself, I reproduce it here:—

TO LANDON RONALD.

Communion with the souls that vigil kept
Along the shores that girt the world's unrest,
And gathered mighty music in their quest,
Is thine . the undiscovered joy that leapt
To trysting hearts what time their kindred slept,
The yearning and the wonder manifest
To these that through uncharted regions pressed,
Are of thine high election to accept.
Among the little line of votarists
To beauty's holiness, thou stand'st elate,
Thy spirit stirred by ravellings of fate,
Love's patient lips and fear's antagonists;
Thou too art one of God's evangelists,
To sweetest revelation dedicate.

. . . . . .

Leoncavallo was a fat, good-natured fellow, very fond of eating, and somewhat ponderous for an Italian. I knew him in the 'nineties when he had made a *furore* with his opera "Pagliacci." I met him once many years after, and it was then that he recounted to me an incident which occurred in a little town in Italy called Forli, known for its silk factories, but of course boasting its own Opera House, notwithstanding its population was not more than forty thousand. He was there by chance, and saw that a performance of "Pagliacci" was in the evening bill. Nobody knew he was there, and he decided to go and listen to it *incognito*. At the opera he sat beside an enthusiastic young lady, who noticed that he never applauded, but on the contrary showed signs of boredom. "Why don't you applaud? Don't you like it?" she asked. The composer, much amused, answered disagreeably, "No; on the contrary, I find it great rubbish and unoriginal. It is the work of a *dilet'ante*." "Then you must be very ignorant of music," she replied, indignantly. "On the contrary," said Leoncavallo, "it is because I know what I am talking about that makes me so certain my opinion is correct." He then tried to

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persuade her that this particular aria was stolen from Bizet, that another motive was from Wagner, and that such-and-such a bit was taken from Verdi, and so on, and so on. She looked at him with pity in her eyes and remained quiet till the end of the performance. "And all that you have told me is your honest opinion of 'Pagliacci'?" she asked, rising to leave. "Every word of it," said the composer. "All right," she said; "one day you'll be sorry for it." He bowed low to her and they separated. Next morning, reading the chief local paper, his eye fell upon an article headed in big letters, "Leoncavallo on his own opera 'Pagliacci,'" and, to his utter confusion, found his conversation of the previous evening written out word for word and accredited to the proper source. The enthusiastic young lady turned out to be a lady reporter who recognized him at once, and who proved too smart for him. He swore to me that he had never said an unkind word about his own music since.

In 1894 Augustus Harris engaged an entire Italian Opera Company to appear at Drury Lane, and it was then that the first performance of Puccini's "Manon Lescaut" was given, and then that I first met the composer. It is interesting to compare the position he held in this country at that time with that he occupies at the present day. "Manon Lescaut" had been acclaimed a masterpiece in Italy, and it remains undoubtedly one of the composer's finest works. It was a failure here on its production. We were simply soaked in Mascagni and Leoncavallo, and even some of the critics insisted that Puccini was nothing but a copyist of those two great men. "Manon" was never a subject that appealed to the London public, but if they had it at all, they liked it with Massenet's music, and rather resented Puccini setting it. No opera could have been presented with greater odds against its success. The book, as I say, was disliked; the composer was practically



"'Why don't you applaud? Don't you like it?' she asked. 'No, I find it great rubbish and unoriginal,' said the composer."

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unknown, and was at once condemned as a plagiarist; the production and performance were third-rate. Notwithstanding all this, an Italian *claque*—which was the fashion in those days—made a tremendous noise, and at the end of each aria or duet cheered and applauded lustily. Puccini was standing next to me at the back of the stage. He was extremely nervous, but every round of applause seemed to put fresh life into him. The reason for my telling this story is simple: It was on this occasion that Arthur Collins and I took hold of Puccini by each arm and by main force prevented him from going on and bowing immediately there was any applause. I have learnt since that it was the custom—the very reprehensible custom—in Italy for the composer to bow on a first night whenever the audience applauded, whether it stopped the action of the opera or not. We have done many outrageously inartistic things in this country, but, thank Heaven, we have never descended to anything quite so low as that!

. . . . . .

ONE of the kindest and best of men it has ever been my lot to know—and to know him is to love him—is Emile Enoch, the head of the great firm of music publishers, Messrs. Enoch and Sons. He has known me since I was a little boy, and has been my publisher for thirty-two years. I have yet to meet the man who has an unkind thing to say about him. I am quite sure that he will be the last to take offence at an old friend for telling one or two little stories against him. Over twenty years ago I wrote a song-cycle called "Summer-Time" (which contains that well-known song, "O Lovely Night"), and I marched off with it to him in great excitement, thinking I had written a masterpiece. He was very kind and gentle in his criticism, but I left him with the manuscript still in my possession, after having been told that it was utterly useless writing music too difficult for anyone to play or sing. Back it went into my portfolio, which was already very full of songs that had been refused by every publisher, and there it remained for a year. One evening I confided to Ben Davies that I had got this work for tenor and orchestra, and asked permission to play it to him. He was delighted with it and showed it to Cowen, who was then the conductor of the Royal Philharmonic Society. He approved of it and promised its production at a Philharmonic concert. Most excited at my good fortune, I offered it again to Mr. Enoch, who was not at all impressed by my story, and still maintained that it could never sell. I offered to *give* it him if he would publish it. He relented towards the end of the interview and said: 'Simply as a friend of yours I will publish it and give you a sixpenny royalty, and if you get as much as a shilling postal-order from me at the end of the year you'll be lucky!" The little work was duly produced, Ben Davies singing it magnificently and Cowen prophesying a big success for "O Lovely Night." The reception was all that could be desired and the critics unanimous—excepting one, the *Times*. The gentleman who represented that paper on this particular occasion thought fit to make the amazing statement that "although it was very scholarly, it entirely lacked melody." Eventually it was published, and I heard nothing about it until a letter arrived asking me to call and see Mr. Enoch. I went, and we talked about all sorts and manner of things, and I was unable to fathom what he wished to see me about. At last, in a most shamefaced sort of way, he said: "Oh, by the way, my boy, we are getting innumerable inquiries for that song of yours in your 'Summer-Time' cycle called 'O Lovely Night,' and we think of publishing it separately. I suppose you have no objection to us doing it on a royalty?" Of course I hadn't, and of course he knew I shouldn't have any objection, but that was his way of confessing that he had been wrong and that I had "struck ile." And that song, and indeed the "cycle," sells better to-day than ever it did in those days.

"Down in the Forest" is such a very well-known song of mine that I need make no apology for telling here how entirely deceived both Mr. Enoch and myself were about its worth. I had written a cycle of four songs called "The Cycle of Life," and felt somehow that the balance was wrong and that another song was required in the middle of the album. I wrote and told the author, Harold Simpson, my feelings, and he promptly agreed with me and sent me "Down in the Forest." I wrote the music in half an hour, took it to Enoch, and thought so little of it that I didn't even wish to play it to him. He insisted, however, and I did so, making the remark: "It will never sell a copy, but it is just the bit of makeweight I want for the cycle." After hearing it he agreed with me and my sentiments; the only dissentient voice was that of his partner, who happened to be present, and said: "You never can tell! It might be a big seller." He was very right in his prediction.

One more story, and I have done with my songs. Twelve years ago I took a mad liking for W. E. Henley's poems I set six of his "Echoes" and showed them to Mr. Enoch, who liked them immensely. I insisted that they should be called "Six Henley Songs." He disapproved and argued.

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"But why *Henley* Songs?" said he. "Much better call them Regatta Songs"!

. . . .

One of the greatest friends of my life was Liza Lehmann, and I still mourn the loss of a very noble woman. I always enjoyed the true story her brother-in-law, Barry Pain, used to tell against her and Maude Valerie White. It appears that Liza was staying with her sister and her brother-in-law in the country, and was compelled one day to come to London. She complained to Barry Pain that she felt lifeless and weak. He recommended her to go to a chemist and get "Phospherine," and she promised to do so. In the train she met Maude Valerie White. Liza informed her that she felt "run down," and Maude White said she was feeling exactly the same. "Well," said Liza, very confidently, "it's all right, because Barry has given me the name of a medicine that will cure me at once. You had better get some. It is called—er—er—oh, I know—*Chlorodyne*." Maude White declared she would get some immediately they reached London. At the station they parted, and met again the following week. "Oh, Liza," said Maude White, "how clever your brother-in-law is! I took the *Aspirin* he recommended you to take, and it cured me at once." "But, my dear Maude," replied Liza, concernedly, "it wasn't 'Aspirin' I told you; it was '*Owbridge's Lung Tonic*.' That is what I took, and it cured me"!



"'H'm!' said Sir Edward Elgar, 'it's a good way of getting a library for nothing, isn't it?'"

. . . . . .

I received a letter one day from a stranger asking me if I would tell her whether "Down in the Forest" was my favourite song, and if not, would I mention the name of the one I preferred and the reason why. This letter gave me an idea. How interesting it would be to know which novel was considered by its author to be the best he had written and to get him to state the reason. I carried out the idea at once, and wrote to many of the best-known living novelists. Almost without exception they complied with my request, and in one or two instances the correspondence led to acquaintanceship being formed, and later to friendship. The collection is a valuable and an interesting one, and it is among my most treasured possessions.* I was showing it one day to Edward Elgar, who carefully examined the books and read the letters. With a twinkle in his eye, he turned to me and said: "H'm! It's a good way of getting a library for nothing, isn't it?

* By a curious coincidence, we are publishing in the present number a symposium on very similar lines.

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Now you must write to all the greatest living painters and get them to send you their favourite picture! It would be nice to have a Sargent, a Lavery, an Orpen, and a few others for nothing!" My reply was for *his* ears only, and would not pass the Censor!

. . . . . .

I met Caruso a day or two after he had made his *début* at Covent Garden Theatre in "Rigoletto," and we struck up a friendship which lasted till the end. He had the spirits of a boy; he loved a joke, and was for ever drawing caricatures, for which he had a great talent. I have dozens of letters from him, and almost every one contains a little humorous drawing of some kind. Apart from his art, I found it difficult to get him to be serious. It must be remembered that I am writing of him as I knew him ten years ago. Owing to the war, I never saw him after 1913. There is no need for me to refer to him as an operatic singer, because all the world knows that he was the greatest of his kind. But as a concert singer he was less known, although he sang more at concerts than is generally supposed. He was in enormous request during the season for concerts given at private houses, and he would receive as much as four or five hundred guineas for singing at one of these functions. And how he hated doing it! But I think the thing he dreaded most were the many "Commands," he received to sing at Court. Although King Edward and Queen Alexandra were the most gracious of Sovereigns, Caruso suffered agonies of nerves when he had to sing before them, and he once told me that he would prefer to sing "Othello" twice through in one evening than have to sing two songs at Court. The surroundings of the concert hall were equally distasteful to him. He came up to Blackpool to sing for me at one of the Sunday Concerts, and the methods he employed were both original and interesting. He would only allow himself to be announced for one solo in the first part of the programme and one solo in the second half. He arranged with his accompanist to have five encores ready after his first appearance, and five more after his second appearance. The result was that he never came on and bowed. He simply sang the item on the programme, walked off the platform amidst a hurricane of applause, promptly returned with an encore, and repeated this performance until the five numbers had been sung. After this not wild horses would have dragged from him anything more. He had given his audience twelve songs, and that sufficed. I remember him bowing, at Blackpool, with a big coat on, hat and stick in hand, and smoking a big cigar. The audience took the hint and eventually ceased applauding.



"I remember Caruso bowing, with a big coat on, hat and stick in hand, and smoking a big cigar. The audience took the hint and eventually ceased applauding."

. . . . .

Innumerable are the stories I could tell and the impressions I might give of such dear friends as Edward Elgar, Henry Wood, Edward German, Thomas Beecham, Kubelik, Kreisler, Mischa Elman, Irene Scharrer, Benno Moiseiwitsch, Arthur de Greef, Mark Hambourg, and many others; but my experience teaches me that it is a fatal error to give the public too much of anything. I heartily dislike either to conduct or listen to long programmes. I have enough stories left to make one or two more "Potpourris"; but in the meantime I feel I have sufficiently imposed my memories on a kind and forbearing audience. If an encore is really demanded, it shall be forthcoming.

(These selections from Sir Landon Ronald's Reminiscences are published by arrangement with Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton, who are shortly issuing "Variations on a Personal Theme" in volume form.)

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THE SINISTER QUEST OF NORMAN GREYES

by

E·PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

No. 4.—The Honour of Monsieur Lutarde.

By MICHAEL.

IT was perhaps the greatest surprise of my life when the trim, benevolent-looking gentleman with the red ribbon in his buttonhole, who was sharing my seat in the Jardins des Invalides, suddenly addressed me by name. For over a year—ever since, in fact, my escape from the English police in Scotland—I had been engaged in the strenuous task of founding and cultivating a new identity. My name was Mr. John D. Harmon. I was a retired dry goods dealer from Providence, U.S.A., and I spent most of my time at the Grand Hotel, talking with compatriots and playing dominoes and billiards. A trip across the ocean, a few days spent in Providence, and a general knowledge of the structure of American life had been all the actual training necessary. I had a circle of friends willing to vouch for me, whom I could have increased almost *ad lib.*; a *dossier* accepted and pigeon-holed by the police; a general appearance which, thanks to my manner of dressing, my horn-rimmed eyeglasses, my short beard and moustache, would have left me unrecognized even under the scrutiny of the great Sir Norman Greyes himself. I had not even heard the sound of one of those names under which I had passed in England, for many months. It came upon me therefore as a thunderclap when my companion, to all appearance a person of the upper and official classes, whom I had noticed many mornings when strolling in the gardens, deliberately went behind the many aliases of which I had made use at different times and addressed me by my baptismal name.

"A little chilly for April, is it not, Monsieur Michael Sayers? Yet the spring marches well. You perceive that the chestnut buds are already waxy."

I turned a little towards him, my right hand stealing towards my pocket. He bore my scrutiny without flinching.

"By what name did you address me, monsieur?" I asked.

"By your own," was the courteous reply. "You have borne many others, have you not, monsieur?—yet between us the real one is perhaps best."

He was of the French police, I decided, and my hand stole a little deeper into my pocket. My mind began to contemplate the chances of successful escape. There were not many people about, and the nearest Metropolitan station was close at hand.

"Permit me to offer you my card," my companion proceeded, drawing an elegant case from his pocket and handing me a thin strip of ivory pasteboard. I read it carefully. My eyes, however, were watching for any movement on his part:—

MONSIEUR GASTON LEFÈVRE.
Agent de Compagnie d'Assurances.
13, *Rue Scribe.*

"That, monsieur," my companion confessed, "is not my name."

"Indeed?" I muttered.

"It is an identity," he continued, "which I have fixed upon the little world in which

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I spend the greater part of my time, a name under which I have earned a certain reputation, a certain social standing. But it is not my own. I was christened Paul, and my surname is Gont."

"Paul Gont?" I repeated, incredulously.

"I am indeed he, monsieur," was the convincing reply.

My fingers once more gripped the butt of the weapon from which they had been momentarily withdrawn.

"It was reported," I said, watching him steadily, "that Paul Gont had joined the secret police of France."

A flicker of annoyance passed across my companion's face. His expression was no longer so beneficent.

"If that were true, monsieur," he rejoined, "I should by now have become their chief. I address you, believe me, as one master craftsman to another."

"Why do you imagine that my name is Michael Sayers?" I asked, cautiously.

He smiled.

"I take a keen interest," he confided, "in the exploits of my—shall I say fellow-adventurers?—in other countries. I read with much amusement—not unmingled, believe me, sir, with admiration—of your escape from the police in Scotland, and the arrival here of Mr. John D. Harmon, from Providence, shortly afterwards, also interested me. There is little that goes on in Paris of which I do not hear."

"You have your own secret police?"

"Certainly, monsieur," he assented; "but they work for me and not for the law."

He lit a cigarette from a handsome gold case which he passed courteously on to me. With his hands upon the carved top of his Malacca cane, he gazed benignly around.

"It is indeed a spring morning," he declared. "There is a perfume of lilac in the air. Even the hard faces of the flower-sellers are softened by the sunshine. And you observe the little nurse-girl over there, my friend, how wistfully she looks around, and how coquettish the little ribbon at her throat? Even we elders——"

"I should be glad to know," I interrupted, "why you addressed me as Michael Sayers?"

"It was a risk, I imagine," my companion admitted. "You are reputed to be a man who shoots from his pocket with great skill. However, remind yourself that I have trusted you with a secret at least as amazing as your own."

My hand came out from my pocket. The man indeed spoke truthfully. The name of Paul Gont was even better known in the history of crime than the name of Michael Sayers.

"You had some reason for making yourself known to me?" I queried.

He bowed.

"Apart from the pleasure of meeting so distinguished a *confrère*," he said, "there is a scheme in which I am at present interested, in which it might amuse you to take part. You are probably a little wearied by the idleness which must go with the building up of a new identity."

"Let me hear about it," I begged.

My companion brushed the ash from his trouser leg and rose to his feet.

"Let us walk to my office," he suggested. "We will see whether any fresh business has come in. Afterwards, we will, if you choose, lunch together at some discreet place. How the police of the world would tremble if they saw our heads together over a bottle of wine!"

I COULD not altogether discard my suspicions, for it seemed incredible that this man was really the daring criminal whom the police of three countries had sought for many years in vain. Nothing in the least disturbing happened, however. We visited a reputable and quietly handsome suite of offices in the Rue Scribe, where my companion conversed for several minutes on various matters of business with his clerks, gave some general instructions, and signed his letters. Afterwards we walked across to the Place Gaillon, where my host selected a lunch with the skill of the born gourmet. He refused to allow me an *apéritif*, but ordered the choicest of wine. In the course of our meal he asked me a most surprising question.

"Do you hear frequently from your friend, Sir Norman Greyes?"

"If I heard from him at all," I replied, "I imagine that the situation would be, to say the least of it, precarious. What do you know about him?"

My companion smiled.

"I had a little affair of the same nature," he confided, "with the sub-Chief of the Police here. François Dumesnil, his name was."

"And where is he now?" I asked.

"He disappeared," was the considered reply. "A great many people disappear in Paris. It was a battle of wits between us, and I was almost sorry when the end came. Self-preservation, however, makes strenuous demands upon one sometimes."

"Concerning Norman Greyes?" I persisted.

"Forgive me, I wandered a little from the point. I mentioned Norman Greyes' name because he is in Paris."

"In Paris?" I exclaimed.

"He arrived by the Calais train last evening. I fancy that later on in the day he may probably stroll into the American Bar at the Grand Hotel."

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The news was in its way terrible, yet I could think of no broken link in the chain of incidents connecting my new life. If Norman Greyes were indeed upon my track, he was possessed of gifts for which I had never given him credit. Either that, or there had been treachery in the one direction where I knew no treachery was possible.

"I take it," I said, slowly, "your suggestion is that Norman Greyes has discovered my whereabouts?"

"I will be perfectly frank," was my companion's prompt avowal. "I do not know that. I am as anxious to discover the truth as you are. There is a distinct possibility that Norman Greyes has come over here in connection with another affair in which I am indirectly interested. If that should be so, his coming may be, so far as you are concerned, only a coincidence. I have a proposition to make to you. Take a taxi-cab and drive out to Versailles for the afternoon. On your way back, stop at the Taverne Bertain, near the Armenonville. I will meet you there at seven o'clock. By that time I shall know. I propose a perfectly fair bargain to you. If he is here on your business, I will assist you to escape. If he is interested in the other little matter I spoke of, I shall claim your help.

"It is a bargain," I promised.

"So to our chicken," my companion murmured, eyeing with approval the dish which had just been extended towards him.



'Let us lunch together at some discreet place. How the police of the world would tremble if they saw our heads together over a bottle of wine!"

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IT was about half-past five that afternoon when I dismissed my taxi and seated myself at one of the small tables under the trees outside the Taverne Bertain. The chairs were set far enough back to avoid the dust, but commanded a pleasant view of the constant stream of passing vehicles. I ordered a glass of tea with a slice of lemon, a packet of Caporal cigarettes, and settled down to one of my favourite tasks—watching my fellow-creatures. Every variety of the human race was in evidence, riding in every description of carriage: the sublimely insolent Parisian beauty with her cavalier of the moment, she the last word in elegance and perfumes, he almost apish in his sartorial vanity; the shopkeeper and his family; the prosperous merchant with his richly-dressed wife; the man of serious affairs, generally with a comely companion. So they passed on, their momentary quest of fresh air an obvious hiatus in the greater and more strenuous pursuit of what for them meant life. A rabble, I told myself a little contemptuously. Not one of them had realized the supreme joy of existence.

It was as though Fate had suddenly decided to deal my philosophy a mortal blow. The thing which I should have deemed impossible was there before me. In a handsome limousine car, travelling slowly in the trail of other vehicles, appeared my enemy, Norman Greyes—and by his side Janet. He wore a light grey suit and a Homburg hat; his long, lean face seemed as sombre as ever. Janet was talking whilst he listened—talking of something, it seemed, more important than the idle flotsam of the moment. The car passed on. I remained seated in my chair. I do not think that I had turned a hair, yet an icy hand seemed to be gripping my heart. I had a moment's wild and savage desire to throw my glass at a thrush hopping contentedly around me.

A quietly-appointed electric brougham turned in at the entrance to the *café*, and the man who had introduced himself to me as Gaston Lefèvre descended. He was looking very spick and span, dressed with the utmost care, and apparently fresh from the barber's. He approached and seated himself by my side.

"You have self-control, my friend," he observed; "but perhaps you did not believe your eyes."

"My eyes are the only things in this world which I do absolutely trust," I answered, coldly.

My companion stroked his grey imperial.

"I will drink absinthe to-day, François," he told the bowing waiter. "See that it is made as I like it. Come, my friend," he added, "throw away your wishy-washy tea and join me."

I shook my head.

"Alcohol is not one of the necessities of life with me," I said. "It stimulates some, I suppose. It merely depresses me. Tell me what you know about the coming of this man Greyes."

"In the first place, then," Lefèvre announced, pleasantly, as he helped himself to one of my Caporals and lit it, "let me reassure you. Greyes is not in Paris on your account."

"And his companion?"

"For the moment I am puzzled," was the frank confession. "I can tell you this, however. Your wife was sent for according to my instructions. I know very little about her, it is true, but I have agents in London who keep me well informed as to what goes on on your side of the Channel, and, from certain things I have heard, I came to the conclusion that she was the one person who could bring to a successful issue the little affair which I shall presently propose to you."

"You seem to be taking things rather for granted," I reminded him.

"Your co-operation is a certainty," he replied, with a smile. "There will be half a million francs for you, and you must be getting short of money. Furthermore, by a very pleasing coincidence, the brains of the other side are controlled by your ancient enemy."

"The scheme is already commended to me," I admitted. "Nevertheless, expound it."

My companion glanced around, as though to drink in the pleasant spring air and to bask in the warm sunshine. He drew a little sigh of content. All the tables around us were empty.

"I will tell you a curious story," he proposed.

By SIR NORMAN GREYES.

I CELEBRATED my return to England and civilization by a stroll down Bond Street on the morning after my arrival. A gusty wind was blowing, fleecy fragments of white clouds were being driven across the blue sky. The occasional sunshine was deliciously warm, the air was full of perfume from the florists' shops and from the flower-sellers' baskets at the corners of the streets. After two years' absence, it was like a new city to me. I met a few acquaintances and exchanged greetings with a couple of friends. Then, at the corner of Conduit Street, I came face to face with Janet Stanfield.

We stopped as though by common consent, and the civilization by which we were surrounded seemed to fall away. The last time I had thought of her was when I had

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lain on the edge of a windy precipice in North-western India, fastened by my belt to the roots of a stunted shrub for safety, with a camp-fire throwing strange and lurid lights into the black gulf below, and my little corps of guides in their picturesque costume murmuring low chants after their evening meal. In that eternal silence, the woman's inscrutable face, her cold yet seeking eyes, the constant invitation of her reluctant lips, had held and filled my thoughts. Sleep had come only with the pink dawn, and a troubled sleep at that. Now I was face to face with her, unchanged, with the same riddle in her eyes and smiling lips.

"Welcome home, Sir Norman Greyes!" she said.

"Thank you," I replied. "I only arrived last night."

She looked at me critically.

"A most becoming shade of brown," she commented. "And you are thinner, too. Have you been going through hardships?"

"None but those I have sought," I assured her. "I was in Mesopotamia for eight months, and in India most of the rest of the time."

"Big-game shooting, the papers said," she continued. "Tell me, my enemy, was it as interesting as man-hunting?"

"Each has its thrill," I replied, "but you must remember that I long ago ceased to be a professional hunter of men."

She smiled.

"So that is why you have let my husband alone?"

"It was not my affair to search for him. That was a matter for the authorities. If my help is sought in solving the mystery of a crime, I am generally prepared to do my best. Otherwise, I do not interfere. You have news of him?"

She laughed bitterly.

"Since he left the Lodge that night," she replied, "and you kicked your heels over at the Dormy House because of your *parole*, I have neither seen nor heard of him."

"Do you mean that?"

She nodded.

"Scotland Yard," she declared, "has not imagination enough to juggle with facts, but as regards detail its myrmidons are wonderful. I think that I was watched every day up to the end of at least the first year. Wherever my husband may be, he will not approach me until it is safe."

"And when it is safe?" I ventured.

"I shall go to him, I suppose," she answered.

I suddenly realized with a little shock that she was plainly, almost shabbily dressed. The undefinable elegance of her still remained, she was still distinct from all other women, but she owed nothing to her clothes. She read my thoughts in most disturbing fashion.

"A terrible neighbourhood, this, to frequent in one's last year's garments," she observed, smiling. "I was just thinking that I should like a black-and-white check tailored suit. Would you like to buy me one, Sir Norman? You really ought to, you know. We made terribly little out of that Menwood Street Bank affair, owing to your flash of inspiration."

"I admit the liability," I replied. "Which establishment shall we patronize?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"At heart I believe that I am an honest woman," she sighed. "I cannot bear the thought of your paying out notes for the adornment of my person. You shall give me lunch instead. For all that you know, I may be as short of food as I am of clothes. I am certainly very hungry."

WE turned towards Regent Street and lunched in a restaurant of bygone fame, half bourgeois, half Bohemian. She would tell me nothing of her manner of life or of her abode, yet somehow or other I fancied, reading between the lines, that life had become something of a struggle for her. She asked me deliberately for my address, but refused me hers. She angled for another invitation, but shook her head when I proffered it. If ever she had been in earnest in her life, she was in earnest when we said good-bye.

"These meetings with you," she declared, "stimulate me more than I can tell you, but they leave something behind which I cannot define. I do not think that I will dine with you, Sir Norman—not just yet, at any rate."

She glanced at her watch and hurried off. I had an idea that she was returning to some daily task. I called at my club, talked for an hour or two with some friends, and in due course made my way back to my rooms. I was restless and ridiculously disturbed. It was the most accursed stroke of ill-luck that I should have met with this woman on the very day after my return. Fortunately, distraction awaited me.

"Mr. Rimmington has been waiting for you for some time, sir," my servant announced. "He is in the sitting-room with another gentleman."

My friend rose eagerly to welcome me as I entered. I shook hands with his companion, who was known to me slightly.

"The Chief asked me to bring Lord Hampden to you," Rimmington explained. "He came this morning to ask for our help in an affair which is rather outside our province. The Chief thought that you might be of assistance."

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"Let me hear about it," I begged.

My distinguished visitor plunged at once into the matter.

"The story is simple enough, Sir Norman," he said, "but serious. You are in touch with French politics?"

"Scarcely," I answered. "I have been in India for the last eighteen months, and only arrived in London last night."

"French politics to-day," Lord Hampden explained, "hinge chiefly upon the question of France's attitude towards Germany. There is a party—the patriotic and military party—fiercely determined to make Germany pay to the uttermost farthing, and to squeeze the last drop of blood out of her by force of arms. The opposing party is all for compromises, encouragement of German trade, and even for a *rapprochement* with Germany. You know, of course, who is the leader of the patriotic party?"

"Lutarde, I should imagine."

"Philippe Lutarde," my visitor assented. "He is hated by the pro-German party, as I will call them, first because of his bitter enmity towards Germany, secondly because of his devotion to England, and thirdly because of his unfaltering rectitude. An attempt was made upon his life not long ago, and the French police have been instructed to watch him night and day. Lately, however, there has been more uneasiness than ever amongst the patriotic party. It is, I fear, true that the Chief of the Police is of the pro-German party, and there is, without doubt, a plot brewing at the present moment against Lutarde. It has been suggested to us that a thoroughly capable Secret Service man from this side might be of assistance in unravelling it. You follow me, I hope, Sir Norman?"

"I think so," I admitted; "but what is the nature of the plot?"

"One can only surmise," Lord Hampden replied. "We do not believe, however, that it is assassination. That would only make a martyr of Lutarde and sanctify his cause. We want you to go over to Paris and consult with a person whose name I will give you. You will be backed in any steps you may think well to take, by unquestionable authority. It will be a difficult commission, and, in a sense, a vague one, but I may say that, in the event of your achieving any success, the Government would consider itself under the deepest debt of gratitude to you."

"I will do what I can, of course," I promised. "When do I start?"

"We should like you to catch the eleven o'clock train to-morrow morning," the



"The thing which I should have deemed Greyes—and

Cabinet Minister suggested, rising to his feet. "If you will dine with me at eight o'clock to-night in Carlton Terrace, I will furnish you with every other detail."

So on the following morning, in less than forty-eight hours after my return to England, I found myself going through the ordinary routine of the Continental traveller, registering my luggage, arranging my smaller belongings in the seat which had been reserved for me, and strolling back to the bookstall for a few final purchases. There I came face to face with Janet Stanfield, engaged upon

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a similar task. She was studying a ladies' journal, and looked up at the sound of my voice. For the moment her indifference deserted her. She was frankly amazed.

"I am a little tired," she admitted.

I performed several small offices for her on the journey, for which I could see that she was thankful. At Calais she had no



impossible was there before me. In a handsome car appeared my enemy, Norman by his side Janet."

"You!" she exclaimed. "Where are you going?"

"To Paris," I answered. "And you?"

"We are fellow-travellers," she said, slowly. "Why did you not tell me yesterday?"

"In an armed truce," I pointed out, "the combatants do not usually disclose their future plans."

She turned a little pale.

"So we are in the lists again," she murmured.

"I thought you enjoyed the struggle," I reminded her.

reserved seat in the crowded train. I did my best to procure one for her, but in vain. I had no choice but to offer her a place in my reserved compartment. She was looking very fragile and tired as she accepted my offer with a grateful smile and sank into a vacant seat.

"You are a wonderful enemy," she confessed. "I am losing all my hatred of you. I will be franker with you than you have been with me, and tell you that when we met yesterday I had no idea of this journey. I am not used to travelling and I hate the sea."

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She curled up as gracefully as a cat and went fast asleep. When she opened her eyes the people were streaming down the corridor in answer to the call for the first dinner.

"Have you eaten anything to-day?" I inquired.

"Nothing, and I am ravenous," she admitted, frankly.

I committed the atrocity of dining at half-past five. Afterwards, she once more took a corner seat in my compartment and lit a cigarette. She was a good deal more like her old self.

"Has your husband sent for you?" I asked, bluntly.

"The *parole* has expired," she reminded me.

I nodded.

"Listen," I continued. "I am not out to do the work of Scotland Yard. I do not know where your husband may be hiding. My journey to Paris has nothing to do with him or his affairs. Yet you must understand this. If chance at any time should put me upon his track, I should follow it up and hand him over to justice. Nothing," I added, looking her steadily in the eyes, "could alter my determination so far as that is concerned."

This time she did not take up the challenge. She only sighed and looked out of the window.

"You are very hard," she murmured.

"I have been a servant of the law," I reminded her, "and I belong to those who choose to abide by the law."

"Why," she asked, "have you never denounced me as the murderess of that man at Woking?"

"Because there has never been a tittle of evidence against you," I replied. "There are any quantity of known criminals walking about to-day, in the same position."

"Supposing there were evidence and it came into your hands?" she persisted.

I hesitated, and my hesitation seemed to count to her as a triumph.

"I cannot assume a situation that has not arisen," I told her, stiffly.

I saw her luggage through the Customs, for which, as she knew no French, she was grateful. I offered her a seat in the car which had been sent for me, but she shook her head.

"I am going to the Gare de l'Est," she said.

"Where you will take a fresh cab and drive to the address which you do not intend me to hear," I remarked. "You need not go out of your way. I will give you another *parole*. I will make no effort to discover your address, so you can take your taxi and drive straight there. I shall be at the Hotel Meurice. If you have an hour to spare, we will drive in the Bois to-morrow."

FOR the next few days I was fully immersed in the complications of the business which had brought me to Paris. Rather to my surprise, Janet called to see me at the hotel, and we took our drive in the Bois. It was easy to realize that, whatever the business which had brought her to Paris may have been, it was of a disturbing nature. She was nervous and ill at ease, looking around all the time as though she were afraid of being observed. There was a certain hardness, too, which seemed to have returned to her. Somehow, I gathered when we parted that she was obsessed by some new fear, some underlying dread of circumstances of which, however, she gave me no inkling. It was only after she had gone, and I found myself thinking over our rather disjointed conversation, that I came to a certain conclusion. I decided that she had received definite and disquieting news of her husband. I could scarcely believe that he was in Paris. Rimmington had assured me that he had been located in Central America, and after all, I decided, the affair was no concern of mine. Some day or other would come the reckoning between this man and myself. I frankly confess that I had not the ghost of an idea that such a day might dawn within the next few hours.

At the end of the third day of my stay a little conference was held in my *salon* between Guy Ennison, who had worked in the English Secret Service during the war, and whose headquarters had been in Paris, myself, and M. Destin, an ex-Chief of the Police, now a member of Lutarde's Government. The latter was a short and corpulent little Frenchman, with black moustache and imperial, vivid black eyes, and a most vivacious manner. He spoke English with a marked accent, but with great fluency. He opened our conference with a few words of plain-speaking.

"Sir Norman Greyes," he said, grasping my hand, "you are welcome. If you can help us to save our Chief, you are more than welcome. He is in danger—of that I am assured."

Much of the rest of his speech was irrelevant. The gist of the matter, however, was contained in his concluding sentences.

"They will seek to strike through his one weakness—his sentimentality, his over good-nature. Philippe Lutarde has always been a lover of women, a kindly and a generous lover. He can resist no appeal to his sympathies, and our French public—you know, perhaps, how strange they are. Whatever our own private lives may be, we tolerate not even indiscretions from our great men. We glorify and sanctify them, we place them on a pedestal, and if they fall we depose them from our hearts. All nations have

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their peculiar form of hypocrisy. That is ours. Lutarde's daily life is being examined at the present moment, hour by hour."

"By the police?" I asked.

"No! By the agents of a very dangerous gang of criminals, whose Chief we believe to be in league with the other side."

"Why not give warning to Monsieur Lutarde?"

"That has been done. He is haughty and impetuous. He will brook no interference with his actions."

"Is his life above reproach?" I asked, bluntly.

"Absolutely," was the confident reply. "He is seventy years of age and a philosopher. He has too much natural dignity to attempt that side of life for which his age renders him unsuitable. At the same time, he is full of sentiment. He likes to dally with the finer emotions. He would inhale the perfume of the roses from his neighbour's garden, but he would never seek to pluck the blossoms."

"Can I meet him?" I suggested.

"To-day at the British Embassy," Guy Ennison replied. "We have arranged a little luncheon. He does not know your errand, and he scarcely even realizes our anxiety."

Our conference broke up soon afterwards. At luncheon I found Philippe Lutarde gracious, charming, and brilliant. He had the clear skin and bright eyes of a younger man, his snow-white hair was a veritable adornment. His sense of humour was abundant and his laughter infectious. He was a delightful companion, and I easily understood the enthusiastic adherence of his friends. Towards the close of luncheon, Ennison spoke to him quite seriously of the existence of some conspiracy against either his life or his honour. Lutarde only smiled.

"My friend," he said, "I much appreciate all your efforts on my behalf, but behold, I am seventy years old! A few years more or less of life now are little. As to my honour, that no enemy can besmirch. If I were to surround myself by guards, as you suggest, place myself in a glass house, I should live an artificial life. I know that without me things might for a time be difficult, and relations between our two countries might suffer. In a month or two, however, all that will be changed—we shall have entered upon a new era—and for these few months I choose to take my risk. I will not submit to espionage."

"You are subject to it at present from the other side," Ennison reminded him gently.

"If I find a man attempting it," was the fierce reply, "I will shoot him."

NEVERTHELESS, for the next three days I cast away my name and I resorted to the meaner walks of my profession. I shadowed the great French statesman from the moment when he rose, until nightfall. I accompanied him, unseen, on those midnight walks against which his friends had protested so forcibly. I watched him give alms freely, speak kindly words to the distressed, and I watched other things a little more tensely, understanding what lay behind them. There was a young girl, very beautiful, with great dark eyes and an appealing face, who stopped him one night with some pitiful story. She was limping, and she pointed continually to her foot. Lutarde called the *fiacre* which she indicated. She leaned her fingers upon his arm. I was close enough to see the pressure of them, to note the subtlety of her upward glances. He handed her to the cab. I heard her pleading words. She was so lonely. If monsieur would drive with her a little way! But Lutarde shook his head gravely. He paid the taxi-cab man a fare which surprised him, lifted his hat courteously, and walked away. I saw the change in the girl's face as he disappeared. That was just one of his escapes. We had a more exciting few minutes one night when he insisted upon walking home from the Quai d'Orsay. I saw the four dark, silent figures gliding together, two of them in front of him and two behind, and I saw the waiting motor-car at the corner of the street. Prudence led me to anticipate their action, whatever it might be. When they heard the spit of bullets against the wall, they took to their heels and ran. To the gendarme who came hurrying up, I had only to show my little badge of authority and he procured for us at once a taxi-cab. Lutarde, convinced now that his enemies were in earnest, yielded to my first proposition. I was installed in his house as major-domo.

We had three or four days of absolute quietude. Then the moment which we had been expecting arrived. It was about six o'clock in the evening, and I was seated in M. Lutarde's study, copying some letters at a desk and posing as his secretary. A servant brought in a note, which the Minister read hastily and passed to me. It was written on British Foreign Office note-paper and signed by a very important personage. The gist of it was contained in these lines:—

The bearer can be altogether trusted. He brings you a verbal message of great importance. You will further our mutual interests if you give it your most serious consideration.

"This, at any rate, is genuine," M. Lutarde observed.

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"It would appear so," I admitted.

"You can show the bearer in," the Minister ordered, addressing his servant.

It was a mere chance which led me to retire to what M. Lutarde was pleased to call my spy-hole. Notwithstanding my disguise, it was perhaps as well that I did so, for, to my amazement, it was Janet who was presently ushered in. M. Lutarde rose to his feet in some surprise.

"You are the bearer of this letter, madame?" he queried, touching it with his forefinger.

"In a sense I am not," she replied, taking the chair to which he pointed, and leaning a little over his desk. "It is my husband who should have come. He would have waited upon you and brought the letter and message to which this note refers, but he was attacked last night by an old complaint of his—sciatica—and he is absolutely unable to move. He asked me to hasten to you, and to beg that under the circumstances you would do him the honour to come to the hotel. He is ashamed to have to ask you, but the doctor who is with him now absolutely forbids him to stand up. I have here his certificate."

"I will come without delay, madame," Lutarde promised, waving away the half-sheet of notepaper which she had tendered.

"I came in a taxi-cab—it is waiting," she continued. "You doubtless would prefer your own car?"

"It is no matter," he answered. "At which hotel do you stay?"

"The Hotel Napoleon in the Rue Tranchard," she replied.

The Minister started. I, too, received a shock, for the district was the most notorious in Paris.

"My dear madame," he protested, "the neighbourhood of the Rue Tranchard is certainly not a fit place for you and——"

"That is what distressed my husband so much in having to ask you to go to him," she interrupted. "It was the particular desire of the person on whose behalf he has come that his presence in Paris should not be known, and my husband deliberately chose this hotel, where he sometimes stayed when engaged on Secret Service work during the war. He desired me to say that, if you preferred not to risk being seen in such a locality, he would endeavour to procure an ambulance-car from the hospital and come here."

"Such a thing would be unheard of," Lutarde protested. "I will come with you, of course."

He touched the bell.

"Show this lady back into the taxi-cab which is waiting," he instructed the servant. "Afterwards, fetch my coat and hat at once."

Janet passed quite close to me on her way to the door. She was her old self—quiet, impassive, deliberate. There was not the slightest sign of satisfaction in her face that she had so far succeeded in her mission. She was just the anxious wife performing a necessary duty for her husband. I emerged from my hiding-place as soon as she was safely out of the way.

"Well?" my temporary Chief asked, looking across at me.

"The moment has arrived," I answered.

M. Lutarde, who by nature was one of the most unsuspicious men that ever breathed, looked positively aghast.

"You suggest that the woman is an impostor?" he exclaimed.

"She is the wife of a well-known English criminal," I declared. "Her story was plausible, but very improbable. What about the letter that she brought?"

M. Lutarde searched his table. I watched him grimly.

"You will not find it," I told him. "I saw her pick it up as she passed."

"What shall we do?" he asked.

"Keep her waiting for a few minutes, and then go to the address she gave you, but nowhere else," I decided. "I am going to telephone to Ennison, and I shall be there before you. If we see this thing through, we may find out who is at the bottom of it. I will see that you run no risk."

"I have no fear," M. Lutarde asserted, frowning.

"I referred only to your reputation," I assured him.

THE two drove off together after a brief delay. Ennison, to whom I had telephoned, picked me up almost immediately in his car. We made one more brief call, and reached the hotel as the taxi-cab containing M. Lutarde and his companion was turning into the other end of the long street. The proprietress, from behind the glass windows of her bureau, eyed us a little suspiciously as we entered. I engaged her in confidential conversation, however, respecting a suite, and she did not even notice the three or four men who had followed us at intervals into the hotel and who disappeared in various directions. Presently I heard the taxi-cab stop. I made an excuse and we hurried into the *salle à manger*. Janet, followed by M. Lutarde, who, although he had taken off his hat, held it in front of his face, crossed the floor swiftly towards the lift. Madame held out her key, which Janet accepted with a little nod. They passed into the lift and we heard it ascend. I returned to the bureau. I allowed myself to show much interest.

"But surely, madame," I whispered, "that

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was Monsieur Lutarde, the great statesman, who entered with the lady ? "

Madame smiled at us knowingly.

" In effect it is he," she admitted. " Madame is the wife of an old client, an American gentleman who left this evening for London."

" A love affair ? " I queried, under my breath.

Madame shrugged her shoulders. Her glance was eloquent.

" What can one do ? " she murmured. " Only I hope that monsieur will never discover. He has a violent temper. . . . . Ah ! The merciful heavens ! It is monsieur himself who returns ! Now there has tragedy arrived indeed ! "

Into the hotel, with his coat-tails flying behind him, came a man who for long I did not recognize. I myself had stepped back out of sight, and I watched the scene. The new-comer acted his part well.

" My key, madame ! " he shouted, banging his fist against the counter.

Madame pretended to search for it. She, too, had been schooled in her part. So had the guests who, with a little crowd of journalists, came closing around.

" But I have it not, monsieur," the woman faltered. " Madame herself——"

The new-comer strode towards the lift, which I imagine was wilfully delayed. He shook the gates and pressed the bell furiously. Madame leaned over the counter.

" But what ails monsieur ? " she demanded.

" What ails me ? " he replied at the top of his voice, speaking now in broken French, now in English with an American accent. " I tell you that not three minutes ago I saw my wife enter this hotel with a man—she who saw me off, as she thought, at the Gare du Nord not an hour ago ! A curse upon your lift, madame ! This is a plot ! "

" But, monsieur——" Madame faltered.

" Hell ! " the outraged husband interrupted angrily.

HE turned and ran for the stairs, followed by a little crowd amongst whom I easily escaped detection. We reached the second floor. The man who now, to my amazement, I realized must be Stanfield, was banging at the panels of a closed door, and shouting.

" It is locked ! " he cried. " I knew it ! Locked ! Open, Suzanne ! You gain nothing by this. I come if I blow the hotel about your ears ! "

The door opened. A few of us were almost pushed in. Janet, with her face buried in her hands, turned away. M. Lutarde, not wholly at his ease, stood there with folded arms.

" Who are you, sir, and what are you doing in my *salon* ? " Stanfield demanded, fiercely.

" I am here at your wife's bidding to receive a message which she assures me that her husband has brought from London," Lutarde replied.

" It is a lie ! " Stanfield shouted. " I am her husband and I know nothing of you. It is years since my wife was in London. These are subterfuges. Tell the truth, woman ? "

Janet threw herself upon the couch and hid her face.

" He is your lover ? " Stanfield insisted.

" I could not help it," Janet sobbed. " You have been so cruel lately. Why did you come back ? "

There was a little murmur amongst the curious crowd in the background. A thin, dark man with pince-nez, obviously a journalist, was on the point of stealing away. The time had come for action. I disentangled myself from the group. Stanfield looked into the muzzle of my automatic.

" Hands up, Stanfield ! " I ordered. " Close in behind, Ennison. Pass the word down to bolt the doors of the hotel."

I had once come to the conclusion that, no matter how long our duel might continue, I should never see a sign of feeling in my enemy's face. Through his wonderful disguise, however, the real man at this moment leaped out. He stood staring at me, viciously, yet with the half-fascinated amazement of one who looks upon a new thing in life. Janet was crouching back upon the couch, shrinking away from me as far as possible, her fingers tearing to pieces some shred of antimacassar. Suddenly she sprang like a cat between her husband and me. He saw his chance and leaped for the door. The crowd of stupefied people opened as though by magic to let him pass. I lowered my pistol and shouted a warning at the top of my voice. There was the sound of a shot below and the trampling of many feet. A grey-haired, well-dressed man with a red ribbon in his buttonhole, whom I afterwards discovered to be the editor of a leading journal, pushed his way through.

" Monsieur," he said to me, " is there any answer to this riddle ? "

" You will find it below," I answered shortly. " There has been a plot to compromise the personal honour of Monsieur Lutarde here, which you have seen frustrated. The injured husband is an English criminal. His wife——"—I hesitated—" his accomplice. Monsieur Lutarde has never seen either of them before in his life. You journalists were invited here to witness something different. If I may be allowed to say so, you will do well to give what pledges may be required of you. The hotel at the

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"'Hands up, Stanfield!' I ordered. 'Close in behind,

present moment is in the hands of agents of the French Government."

There was a little murmur.

"Might one inquire your name, sir?" my questioner demanded.

"My name is Norman Greyes," I answered. "I was once an English detective. I am now in the employ of the English Government."

The man bowed low.

"The affair is explained, sir," he said.

The curious crowd of onlookers melted away. Downstairs, behind the locked doors, an inquisition was being held. M. Lutarde came over and shook me by the hand.

"My thanks later, Sir Norman," he began. "Meanwhile——"

Ennison entered, accompanied by M. Lutarde's private secretary and a personage whom I recognized as a high official of the French Court. There was a great deal of rapid conversation between the four, a mingled outpouring of congratulations and wonder. Then we all moved towards the door. I touched Ennison on the arm.

"What about Stanfield?" I inquired, eagerly.

"Escaped for the moment," was the reluctant admission. "He got through the back premises of the hotel, somehow."

"Escaped!" Janet murmured, in enigmatic accents.

They were filing out of the room. I was the last. Janet rose to her feet. She stood there looking at me.

"What happens to me?" she asked.

"There is no charge against you that I am aware of," I replied.

She came a step nearer.

"I am afraid," she muttered. "They will say that it was my fault."

Ennison was already out of the room, leaving the door, however, wide open. The woman and I were alone.

"I am afraid," she repeated, and she came still a step nearer.

Below, the hotel was in a turmoil. I was suddenly sick of the whole business, a sordid piece of chicanery.

"You descend the ladder," I said. "I scarcely believed that you would stoop to an intrigue of this sort."

"We needed the money," she declared hardly. "He had spent everything, and I had only what I earned as a dressmaker. The people who stood behind this affair were generous. It would all have been so easy and so safe if you had not interfered. I begin to think that you are my evil genius, Norman Greyes."

I heard myself called from below. I took a last glance at her. Her beautiful body was drawn to its utmost height. She was breathing quickly, as though with some suppressed emotion. The danger-lights were gleaming in her strange-coloured eyes. For a single moment temptation raged within me. Then I remembered.

"If you need money to get you back to England," I said, "you can apply to

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Ennison. Pass the word down to bolt the doors of the hotel.'"

the British Consul. I will arrange it for you."

"I may not come to you—for it?"

"No!"

I heard Ennison's returning footsteps upon the stairs. I turned away and closed the door behind me.

"Everything O.K.," Ennison declared, triumphantly. "Our friends have made quite a coup."

"Any further news of the outraged husband?" I asked.

"I'm afraid he's got clean away," Ennison confessed. "Our people declare that he was helped by the police. Come on, old fellow, my car's waiting, and we're going to have an absinthe at the Café de la Paix."

A QUARTER of an hour later we sat amongst the most cosmopolitan crowd in the world, outside the Café de la Paix, sipping our absinthe and watching the passers-by.

"A very successful evening's work," Ennison declared, thoughtfully.

"So far as it goes," I acquiesced. "After all, though, a man with so many enemies can never be held altogether free from danger."

"We have gone to-night farther than you think," my companion assured me. 'The agents of the French Government who were with us extracted confessions from the hotel proprietor and his wife, amongst others, which implicate some very well-known people. I need not explain further to you, I am sure. You can rely upon one thing for certain, however. From this evening Monsieur Lutarde is free from the danger of any attempt upon either his life or his honour."

"In that case," I agreed, 'our work has indeed been well done."

We drank our absinthe in great content. Many months afterwards, a curiously insignificant episode of those next few minutes was brought forcibly to my mind. Near us, a very precise and elderly man, carefully dressed, with a red ribbon in his buttonhole and a stiff, official bearing, raised his hat to Ennison as he passed us. My companion returned his salute, and I watched his dignified wandering amongst the chairs until he found one to his liking. The waiter, seeing him approach, bowed low, and hurried away without waiting for his spoken order.

"Who was that?" I inquired, curiously.

"An insurance agent in the Rue Scribe," Ennison replied. "His name, I think, is Gaston Lefèvre."

"A type," I observed.

"There are many here," my companion assented.

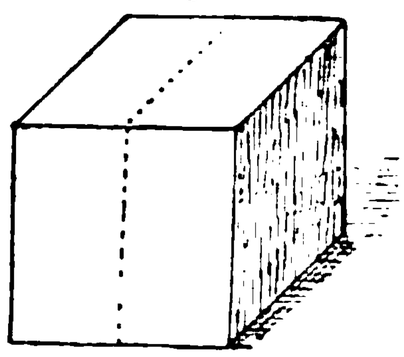
(Another thrilling story in this series will appear next month.)

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PERPLEXITIES. By Henry E. Dudeney.

588.—CUTTING THE CHEESE.



HERE is a simple question that will require just a few moments' thought to get an exact answer. I have a piece of cheese in the shape of a cube. How am I to cut it in two pieces with one straight cut of the knife so that the two new surfaces produced by the cut shall each be a perfect hexagon? Of course, if cut in the direction of the dotted line the surfaces would be squares. Now produce hexagons.

589.—A CRITICAL VOTE.

A MEETING of the Amalgamated Society of Itinerant Askers (better known as the "Tramps' Union") was held to decide whether the members should strike for reduced hours and larger donations. It was arranged that during the count those in favour of the motion should remain standing, and those who voted against should sit down.

"Gentlemen," said the chairman in due course, "I have the pleasure to announce that the motion is carried by a majority equal to exactly a quarter of the opposition." (Loud cheers.)

"Excuse me, guv'nor," shouted a man at the back, "but some of us over here couldn't sit down."

"Why not?"

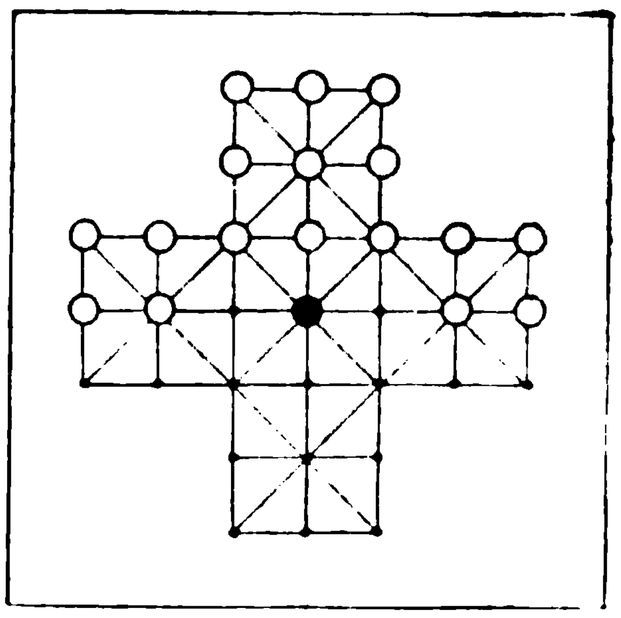
"'Cause there ain't enough chairs."

"Then perhaps those who wanted to sit down but couldn't will hold up their hands. . . . I find there are a dozen of you, so the motion is lost by a majority of one." (Hisses and disorder.)

Now, how many members voted at that meeting?

590.—ANCIENT "FOX AND GEESE."

THE puzzle-game (No. 575) that I gave in our issue for November last seems to have interested a great many readers. A number of correspondents had played it in their youth, and it appears to be also known in various parts of Europe by the names "Wolf and Sheep" and "Hare and Hounds." Curiosity is expressed as to the more ancient form of the game to which I referred, so I redeem my promise to give it. The illustration shows the form in which the board is set out in Strutt's "Sports and Pastimes," and it reminds one of Solitaire. The seventeen white counters are Geese and the black one is the Fox. The two players play alternately, one counter at a time, and the Geese move first. The Fox cannot be taken, but he may take a Goose if he can jump over it to a vacant square next beyond, as in draughts. The object of the Geese is to shut up the Fox so that he cannot move, when they win. If the Geese are all taken, or their number so reduced that they cannot enclose the Fox, then the Fox wins. Of course, the pieces move only along the lines from one point to an adjacent one. Now, can a wily Fox defeat the Geese?



591.—AN OLD ENIGMA.

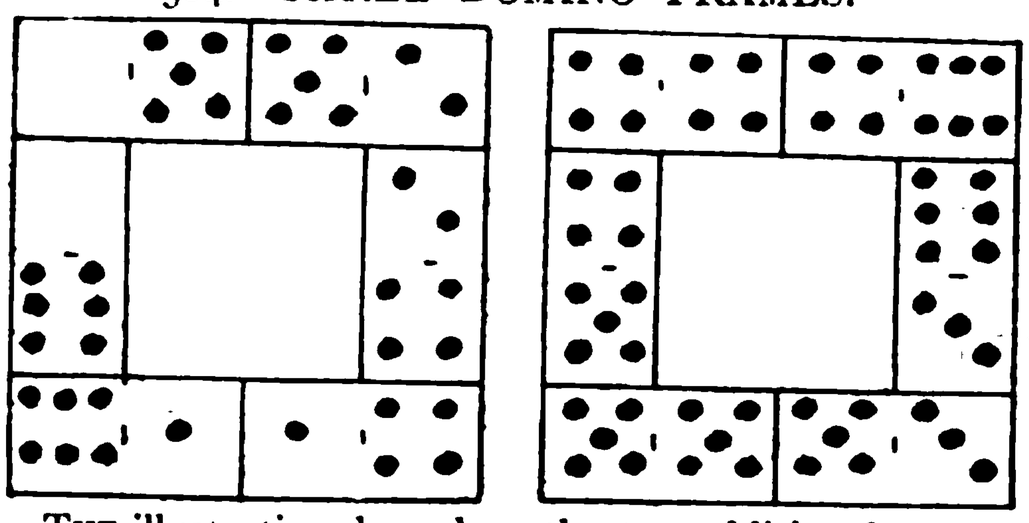
My name declares my date to be
The morning of a Christian year.
I'm motherless, as all agree,
And yet a mother am, 'tis clear;
A father, too, which none dispute,
And, when my son comes, I'm a fruit.
And, not to puzzle you too much,
'Twas I took Holland for the Dutch.

592.—AN EXCEPTIONAL NUMBER.

A NUMBER is formed of five successive digits (not necessarily in regular order) so that the number formed by the first two multiplied by the central digit will produce the number expressed by the last two. Thus, if it were 1 2 8 9 6, then 12 multiplied by 8 produces 96. But unfortunately 1, 2, 6, 8, 9 are not successive numbers, so it will not do.

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

584.—THREE DOMINO FRAMES.



THE illustration shows how the two additional square frames may be constructed, the pips in one adding up 12 on every side, and in the other 18.

585.—A CLOCK PUZZLE.

THE time is 6¾ minutes past 9, when the hour hand is 45 9-16 minutes past XII. Then 45 9-16 is the square of 6¾.

586.—AN AMUSING DEFINITION.
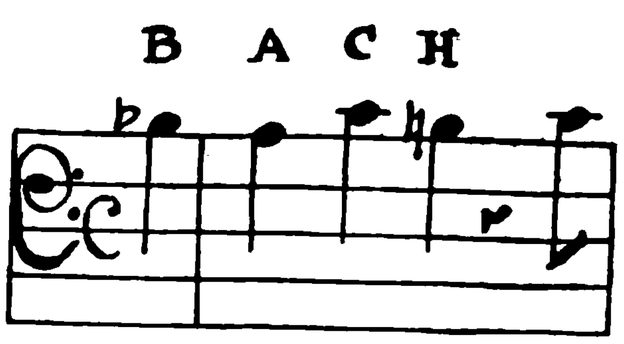
THE answer is a lady on horseback—side-saddle, of course.

587.—MONKEY AND PULLEY.

WE find the age of the monkey works out at 1½ years, and the age of the mother 2½ years, the monkey therefore weighing 2½lb., and the weight the same. Then we soon discover that the rope weighed 1¼lb., or 20 oz.; and, as a foot weighed 4oz., the length of the rope was 5 feet.

582.—A MUSICAL ENIGMA.

A LARGE number of correspondents have sent me the undoubtedly correct solution to this enigma—



B A C H. If you turn the cross round, you get successively B flat (treble clef), A (tenor clef), C (alto clef), and B natural (treble clef). In German B flat is called "B" and B natural "H," making it read B A C H. As I have been familiar all my life with an organ fugue by C. P. Emmanuel Bach, based on the family name and beginning as in the illustration, it is curious that I could have overlooked the solution.

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"I WANT MY LETTERS," THE GIRL PANTED.
"THEN YOU DON'T TRUST ME?"
"WHY SHOULD I, WHEN YOU'VE DECEIVED ME WORSE THAN BEFORE?'

(SEE PAGE 284.)

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The CHINESE CABINET

BY

C. N. & A. M. WILLIAMSON

ILLUSTRATED BY W. SMITHSON BROADHEAD

IT seemed to Cecil West that every human being she knew at Lilac Valley had chosen *her* train to go to New York!

On most mornings this wouldn't have mattered. Cecil would have enjoyed the nods and friendly looks. But to-day it was different. She had thought, by starting late and taking a slow train which changed at Jamaica, to miss the "crowd." All these pleasant people, however, had good reasons for avoiding, or failing to catch, the favourite morning train. Very innocent, frank reasons they were! Cecil felt guilty and sick as she agreed with Mrs. Ashe, who squeezed cosily into the seat at her side, sure of a welcome. Yes, it *was* a bore having so little time to shop, but some mornings there was a lot to do at home. You just couldn't tear yourself away!

"Where are you going first?" asked Molly Ashe.

Cecil had expected this question, if not from Molly, then from some other woman, and she knew exactly to what point it was meant to lead.

"Oh, I haven't quite made up my mind," she fibbed.

"I was only thinking, if it was Wanamaker's, we might lunch together. It would be so nice," explained Mrs. Ashe.

"I'm dreadfully sorry, but—I'm lunching at a friend's house," Cecil excused herself.

"Sad for *me*, not for you!" laughed Molly. "Anyone I know?"

"I don't think so," Cecil answered, almost praying not to blush or stammer. Molly was the kindest creature on earth, but she was aware that Laurance West was away for the week-end; also that Cecil had been invited to go, and refused. Larry was adorable, but he was twelve years older than Cecil, who had come to Long Island as a bride six months ago, with the reputation of being a flirt. If Molly had looked mischievous, it might have meant more fibs for Cecil; but apparently Mrs. Ashe had no naughty thoughts. Cecil inquired about the baby; Molly caught up the subject as a soldier catches a shot flag; and the rest of the journey passed in peace.

At the New York end, by adroitness Cecil contrived (or hoped she'd contrived) to lose all her friends in the crush. She sprinted for the line of taxis outside the station, and almost whispered "Grand Central," lest Molly or someone might be at her back.

"That would have been the *limit!*" she sighed. If Molly Ashe or Ivy Innes had chirped "Can't we share a taxi?" Cecil would not have known what to say.

But luck was with her—undeserved luck. She was off, and a backward flash of the eye found no familiar face.

At the station there was time to buy a book, but Cecil knew that not the most thrilling fiction ever printed could beguile her from realities. Her hot brain smouldered like the sealed pit of a mine on fire.

She found a seat in the train, and glanced round anxiously. Thank Heaven, not a soul she had ever seen before!

There was no time for luncheon on board, but if there had been Cecil could not have touched food. She had taken no breakfast, except a cup of black coffee choked down to steady her nerves, and it would be after two o'clock before she reached Rivergrove Manor.

But *he* would be waiting luncheon, and she must eat, or let him see how he had frightened her. That would please him too much!

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At the small country station his motor was waiting, as he had stated that it would be.

The car bowled smoothly along the winding road, then wheeled through an open gateway. The place deserved its name of "Rivergrove." The avenue was lined with shrubs in scented bloom. How the fragrance struck at Cecil's heart! It was so sweet—sweet as sad music. It sent a tingle of love for far-off Larry through her veins. She longed to be with him, to lie in his arms, sobbing "I want you to comfort me!" and to hear Larry say (as he did say when she was in some small trouble), "Little girl, tell me all about it. There, it's going to be all right."

But she could not tell him of this trouble, and if he found out, things between them would never again be "all right." Cecil was sure of that, because Larry detested Kingsley Blake. He had obviously hated her acquaintance with Blake when she was Cecil Stainforth; and it had irked him beyond endurance to know that he had no right to object. She had believed—and believed to this day—that Larry would never have torn himself out of bachelorhood if he hadn't been impelled to snatch her from "the Strong Man," as Kingsley Blake was called by his friends. One night at a ball, when Blake had seemed to delight in making Miss Stainforth conspicuous, Larry had lost his head in a thrilling way, begged her to cut Blake, and on top of that had proposed. Cecil had never dared hope that he would do that! She had been in love with Larry for months, and her fear that he didn't care—or didn't care enough—added to money-troubles, and girl-worries of all sorts, had been wearing her nerves to rags, till that wonderful night.

SHE slipped nervously into the dusk of the great hall as a Japanese butler opened the door.

"Mrs. West? Mr. Blake is in the library, madam, waiting for you," the little dark man announced, in correct, metallic English; and threw open another door opposite the entrance.

Cecil hesitated. She vaguely dreaded some trick. She loathed the idea of being shut up with Blake in his own special sanctum. But she had come to his house. It would be foolish and futile to make a fuss now that she was here. With a lift of her chin, and an effort at dignity, the girl—childishly slim in meek blue serge—stepped across the threshold. Instantly, softly, the door closed, and Cecil stopped dead. Kingsley Blake sat smiling at her, in a wheeled invalid-chair.

"Forgive my not getting up to welcome you," spoke the remembered voice which Cecil heard often in troubled dreams. "My misfortune, not my fault! Now you see why I had to bring you so far."

Words would not come. Cecil was completely taken aback. Perhaps *this* was part of the trick her instinct awaited!

It was grotesque to see that gladiator-form in smart modern dress prone in a chair made to support weakness; yet Blake was formidable as he sat, quite motionless, his big hands pallid on the arms of the wheeled chair.

Somebody had described him once: "Head of a statesman, eyes of a cynic, nose of a financier, mouth of a voluptuary, chin of a prize-fighter." Cecil remembered that saying, as she stared down at Kingsley Blake, and he stared up at her.

"Is it a joke, or—have you had an accident?" she stammered, when her voice came back.

"Both," he answered, with a wry smile. "An accident of Fate: a joke the jade has played on me. I thought I was Samson. My doctor warned me last year that I wasn't—that I'd passed the age for stunts. But showing off my strength has been the last of the vanities for me. I strained my heart a month ago—a bad strain. Are you glad the old lion's claws are cut—or does the sight of me like this wake some human sympathy in your hard little heart? If it does, toddle across that half mile of rug and shake hands."

Warily, Cecil obeyed, and gave him a small brown glove. He pressed it painfully, but when she tried to pull the hand away he surprised her by letting it go.

"Are you afraid of the wounded lion?" he jeered. "Don't be. He didn't summon you to his den to tear you to pieces."

"I'm *not* afraid!" the girl protested. "I—needn't have come if I had been afraid——"

"Or, you needn't have come if you *hadn't* been. Isn't that the frank way to put it?"

To escape his eyes, Cecil looked down at the glove which she had begun to pull off, hoping to hide the trembling of her hands. "I came," she explained, "because your letter said that, if I did what you asked, *you* would do 'something to make me glad.' There's only one thing you can do to make me glad. And so——"

"So here you are—to get it! Good. Now we've reached an understanding on that point! But we'd better put off our discussion of the thing itself till after food, don't you think so?"

Blake touched an electric bell close to his hand on a desk. Almost instantly the Japanese butler opened the door.

"Luncheon is served, sir," he announced; and motioning Cecil to precede him, Blake

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began to wheel his arm-chair out of the vast room.

Even now Cecil could hardly believe that the man wasn't acting a part. She would not have believed, if his face—once ruddy-brown from forehead to chin—had not faded to a dull yellow. It dazed her to see the giant breaking himself to invalid habits. But she could not pity him, because she



She found a seat and glanced round anxiously. Thank Heaven, not a soul she had ever seen before!

feared this new Kingsley Blake even more than she had feared the old one. She felt as if an implacable enemy had dodged behind a hospital screen.

He insisted that she must eat something of every course, assuring the girl each time that he had chosen the thing especially for her, knowing how she liked it.

With these friendly allusions he mingled anecdotes of past days, when little Cecil Stainforth had been trapped into all sorts of foolishness by the admiration of a set richer and more sophisticated than her own. "Do you remember this?" "Have you forgotten that?" he persisted, sharply prodding her reluctance with hints calculated to excite even Japanese interest.

"This champagne's of the same brand and year I made you drink that evening when I'd persuaded you to dine at my flat and tell me all about your money troubles," he recalled. "The wine did you a lot of good then, though you thought it wouldn't, and I'm sure it would now if you'd try. That was the night before you wrote me the first of those six sweet, grateful little letters I've treasured so, ever since——"

It was all that Cecil could do to sit still, instead of springing up and rushing out of the room. But she controlled herself as a woman, half fainting, clings to consciousness.

"You said before lunch that it would be better to speak of these things *later*," she desperately reminded Blake. "I—I think you were right. It would be *much* better."

"Oh, then you've changed your mind?" he asked, innocently. "I understood that you wanted to save time. Well, let's dig up another subject! What are you most interested in these days? Home and husband? By the by, I've often wondered just when you *did* get engaged."

"It was at Susan Heming's ball," Cecil girded herself to answer.

"Oh, so *that* was it! I remember the

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night well. You were—rather displeased with me."

"That's one way of expressing it."

"H'm! Yes. I had a certain difficulty in getting you to cut a dance you promised West. But you did cut it. I took you into Susan's Marie Antoinette Fan Room, to sit out and discuss things. West came nosing round—though really he was no more of a dancing man than I was—and found us together."

"Yes."

"He whisked you away like a flash, and left explanations for later?"

"He didn't ask me to explain, and I didn't try to explain. It's not worth while to talk of it now!"

"It interests me, especially as you confess you were engaged to Larry that night. But never mind, if the confidences are too sacred! Well, you ought to thank me, my child, for bringing your romance about. Larry wasn't what's called a marrying man. And, I suppose, when the little princess had been soothed and caressed, she promised never to put herself within long-distance call of the poor old dragon again?"

"I promised never to—speak to you again if I could help it—without making myself conspicuous," Cecil admitted.

Blake laughed aloud. "By Jingo, that hits my sense of humour!" he roared. 'And if the dear Larry hears about—to-day, I suppose it'll be the occasion when you *couldn't* help speaking—without being conspicuous.'"

"He won't hear about it," the girl gasped, "unless he hears through you. And even you wouldn't be wicked enough—cruel enough—to tell, after—almost *forcing* me to come here!"

THE blood stung her cheeks. She had forgotten the two Japanese servants whose shadowy presence had shamed her at first. As she sprang to her feet, one of the men caught her chair before it fell, but Blake, smiling, covered the incident.

"Yes, we'll have our coffee now—in the library," he said. "Larry hasn't trained you to stand teasing any better than you used to, I'm afraid. But don't worry, my dear child. I vow I won't tell your husband that you kindly accepted an invitation to visit an invalid friend. I invariably keep my vows—*in one way, if I can't in another.* Now, come along! We must have our quiet chat, if you're really bound to catch that four o'clock train."

"Now," Blake said, when the door had shut them in, "you can tell me what bribe you thought I meant to offer for this afternoon call."

"There's only one thing you can have meant," the girl flung back. "One thing, unless you brought me here on false pretences. I thought you would 'make me glad' by giving me—at last!—those wretched letters. Please, don't torment me any more. *Give* me the letters—or let me read each one to make sure all six are there, and burn them——"

Blake shook his head slowly as he set down his coffee-cup. "I didn't bring you to Rivergrove, my dear, with the intention of giving you the letters."

Cecil jumped up with a strangled cry. "Oh!" she choked, and could find no word for the fury in her heart.

"Don't turn me to stone," Blake laughed. "You'd never get your letters if you did. If you don't, you may; who knows?"

"I want my letters," the girl panted.

"Then you don't trust me?"

"Why should I, when you've deceived me worse than before? You know I wouldn't have come except for the letters. Nothing else on earth would have tempted me. I——"

"Don't be too sure. And—Cecil—don't condemn me unheard." The man's voice altered. "Yes, I let you think you would get the letters: I wanted to see you—for the last time. That was the only way, unless I whined and told you I was doomed. And if I had, perhaps you wouldn't have come! I loved you, Cecil, in those days when you accused me of playing with you as a cat plays with a mouse. God! 'Twas worse for the cat than for the mouse! I wanted you so—I'd have married you, if my wife would have come from Europe and divorced me—or if she'd given me half a chance at divorcing her. The reward I really meant for you to-day is this: to tell you that now I'm under sentence of death I intend to make a new will and leave you a legacy."

Cecil burst into tears.

"I don't want a legacy!" she cried. "And I don't want you to die. I'm not—not so hard as that. But I'd hate to have you leave me anything. Even the letters, if they came after you—if they came in that way, might do harm, not good. People—Larry—would know, and—and—oh, it was *you* who told me how those letters could be misunderstood! You told me that night at Susan Heming's, before Larry took me away. You said that no one who read them would believe me just the silly, innocent, ignorant girl I truly was. Larry loves me, but—if he read the letters he'd misunderstand. I know he would! Though I told him the truth and he—*thought* he believed, he'd never be quite sure. You see, he couldn't bear—he didn't like you. He used to know Mrs. Blake, and I promised.

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I've broken my promise now. He would not trust me again. Oh, I couldn't live!" She buried her face in her hands and sobbed.

Blake stared broodingly at the smart little hat on the bowed head. "You love West so much?" he asked.

"Yes, I do!" the girl wept. "I adored the ground he walked on, even when I thought he didn't care. It's—not very clever of me to tell you that, but——"

'Don't worry. What you've told me will make no difference in the legacy. More than ever"—he spoke slowly—"my mind is fixed on that. If—among other things—I leave you those six letters in their one envelope (that's how I keep them, and take them out to read now and then), I'll manage the gift in such a way that West won't get hold of the dangerous documents. At least, he won't if he's the honourable man you think he is. I'd like to leave you money, Cecil, to remember me by; but, for your own sake, I daren't do that. Also, I hope you don't need money as you once did. West's not a rich man, but I don't doubt he can give you bread and cheese—with his kisses. No. What suggested itself to me was some—valuable antique. Something which would last for ever; a piece of furniture; for instance—look over there. You see that green lacquer Chinese cabinet?"

"Yes," Cecil replied.

"It's one of the best bits I own," Blake went on, faintly smiling. 'Do you like Chinese lacquer? Would you *appreciate* that cabinet if I—left it to you?"

"I—I don't know what you mean by 'appreciate'!" the girl stammered. "I know you mean something—more than you say. Are the letters——"

Blake laughed again. "Don't look a gift horse in the mouth, my child! There are people who would give many dollars to get that Chinese cabinet. They wouldn't haggle before offering a price, and inquire—for instance, whether there was a secret drawer, and what was in it. The thing's unique! What I ask is: *Do you want it as it stands*—or shall it fall into the hands of—strangers?"

Cecil guessed what Blake's words concealed, or—*what he meant her to think they concealed*. If she could only be sure which!

"Make up your mind, my dear," he benevolently advised, "because—you know the adage, 'Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest.' I'd like nothing so well as to have you spend the afternoon, or even dine—and why *shouldn't* you, if the papers don't lie in saying that West's gone to Maine for the week-end? But, if you're determined to catch the four o'clock train——"

Cecil jumped up with a cry of fear fulfilled. "Oh, you haven't let me miss it!" she gasped. "I felt—I knew you'd——"

"You felt and knew wrong. I haven't let you miss the train. *Au contraire*. I ordered the car to be ready in case you insisted, and it'll be waiting for you now. But you ought to be off in two minutes if you don't want to cut things too fine."

"Oh!" exclaimed Cecil. "You waited till the last minute before you'd talk of the letters. I came for them—and I've got to go without——"

"One minute wasted," announced Blake, eyes upon the clock on his desk. "You must trust me in the matter of those letters. There's just time to decide about the Chinese cabinet. Do you want it? Have you a den or a boudoir of your own where you can keep it—to remember me?"

Cecil was at the door, and had grasped the knob. It turned under her hand. Involuntarily she stepped back. The butler decorously appeared. "Excuse me, sir," he began, "the chauffeur says if the lady wishes to catch the train——"

'Yes—yes! I will have the cabinet," Cecil cried, and without a look or a word of good-bye she was gone.

The girl almost tumbled into the grey limousine, which leapt away as the Japanese shut her in. There was no room in her beating brain for rage about the trick played on her—the letters dangled before her eyes, then snatched out of reach: no room for thankfulness that she had escaped: heart and mind were too full of throbbing fears that she might lose the train.

"You'll just do it, madam," said the chauffeur, as she hurled herself out of the car at the station while the train was thundering in.

DAYS passed, softly and sweetly, at Lilac Valley.

Larry came joyously back from the first visit he had made without her. He was dearer and more adorable than he had ever been. Cecil tried to believe that she was in no danger. Her secret visit to Rivergrove Manor hadn't been quite in vain. Surely she *might* trust Blake, now that he was a doomed man, trust him not actually to betray! And without doubt the letters *were* in a secret drawer of that Chinese cabinet. It would come to her in the end. She would find the drawer. At last she would have the letters. Meanwhile, she must keep her nerve and be like herself, or Larry would begin to wonder.

By and by it became not so hard a struggle to have patience. A crust of calmness cooled about the hot lava of fear. Cecil slept better; and one morning, three weeks after the dreadful day, Larry complimented her at breakfast on her colour.

"You look like one of those roses in the

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garden, whatever you call 'em, that have pink tips to their white petals," he said, as she handed him his creamed coffee. Then, after one long look, as if to photograph a vision for all day upon his retina, Larry applied himself to his correspondence.

The pile by his plate consisted entirely of business letters. Cecil knew this, because she had placed them there herself. Larry concentrated upon them now, and opened one after another with the swift precision characteristic of him.

Suddenly he glanced up from a letter he had flicked out of its envelope, and handed it across the table to her.

"Sorry, darling!" he apologized. "I opened this by mistake. Thought it was addressed 'Mr.' And it is like 'Mr.' on the envelope. But it seems to be 'Mrs.' inside."

Cecil took the long white envelope indifferently. It looked dull, except for the neatly-cut end, showing Larry's precision. The address was typed, and the "s" in "Mrs." was all but obliterated. No wonder Larry had thought that the thing was for him!

"Some bill, I suppose," said the girl. "But I'm not worrying. I don't owe one hundred dollars in the world." She laughed, because she felt young and almost gay again. Yet Larry did not answer. And he did not laugh. He had picked up another letter, and absorbed himself in it. A vein was beating in his forehead, which meant with him, Cecil had learned, intense concentration or exertion of will-power.

She dropped her gaze from Larry's face to the typewritten letter, which had no address at the top, and read the first line without understanding its drift. At the end of the second, however, her heart leaped, then seemed to drop out of her body.

DEAR MRS. WEST,—

I have now reason to believe that the specialist I spoke of when you came to lunch with me at Rivergrove, three weeks ago, didn't alarm me unnecessarily about my health. I want you to know that I expect to make my will to-day or to morrow, and that as soon as possible it will be drawn up in legal form. The green lacquer Chinese cabinet I pointed out to you in my library will, as I promised, be yours, *with all its contents*, including certain documents which may be of special interest to you. I trust it will be a relief to your mind to be assured of this once again, before I "go hence and am no more seen."

Your old and ever faithful friend,

KINGSLEY BLAKE.

It was all the girl could do not to yield herself to physical weakness and faint. But she clutched consciousness and power to think.

Blake's name was scrawled, in his own handwriting, at the foot of the page. Ten to one Larry had involuntarily glanced down at it as he unfolded the paper! People almost always did this. And there was the word "Rivergrove" half-way through the letter. Larry could scarcely have missed that. Would he be human if he hadn't read the whole thing through? In his place she didn't believe that she could have resisted. And all he hadn't seen in black and white he would guess.

This was what Kingsley had planned to do when he said that, if Larry were the "honourable man she thought him," he would never find out. Blake had even then meant to send the letter with the obliterated "s" on the envelope that turned "Mrs." into "Mr." Her fate was to depend upon the scruples of her husband—Larry, the man who had rescued her from him. How like Kingsley Blake!

The girl felt deathly sick. Life seemed ended, a bright thread snapped. She wished that she might die at this moment, because even if she burst out with the whole story, Larry wouldn't believe it. No man would. No man would forgive.

Larry's voice made her start, almost made her drop the letter.

"Well, baby-girl, I must be off!" he said. "Give me a kiss and a blessing."

Cecil was astounded. Trembling, she got to her feet and forced herself to face him.

There was no terrible light in Larry's eyes. They held the smile she adored, and never understood. It was not more baffling to-day than it had been yesterday, or the day before. Oh, God, *could* it be that he'd read only "Dear Mrs. West" at the top of that letter, and had not let his eyes stray farther down?

She sank feebly into her husband's arms, and rested there as he kissed her good-bye. Then, as if galvanized to energy, she was able to walk with him to the front door, to watch him down the garden path, and at last to wave her hand as he turned at the gate to take off his hat. Could he go through this dear, familiar programme if he were despising her in his heart, and thinking out some terrible punishment? Or—*could* he be doing just that? What was the mystery behind his eyes and smile?

Cecil shivered as if a wind had blown over her soul. It was hideous to hate a dying man as she couldn't help hating Kingsley Blake.

NEVER had there been such a day as that, which dragged on towards dreaded night. The girl longed for Larry to come back, yet felt it would be better to run away than wait to see him. But she did not run away. She went about

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Cecil was astounded. Trembling, she got to her feet and forced herself to face him.

as usual. She ordered Larry's favourite dishes for dinner; and she was in the act of putting on a white frock which he admired when a voice seemed to speak in her ear: "Won't you wear black to-night?"

It was "just nerves," of course! She

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fastened the white dress, but her fingers were cold as if she had touched the face of a corpse. It was a relief to run downstairs and pick up the evening paper, which she would have time to glance over before Larry was due.

"Sudden Death of New York Millionaire" was the first headline that caught her eyes. "Kingsley Blake, the Strong Man of Wall Street, Dies of Heart Failure at his Country Place on the Hudson."

Whence had come the voice that whispered, "Won't you wear black?"

The paper was still in her hand, though she had read no farther, when Larry came.

Not once since the night they were engaged, at Susan Heming's ball, had Larry ever mentioned the name of Kingsley Blake to Cecil. And he did not mention it now, though he must have read the news; he must have guessed that she had read it.

Cecil lay awake that night, her head on Larry's warm, strong-muscled arm. She would have given years of her future to know if his quiet breathing meant sleep or secret watchfulness. Sometimes she thanked God that he had not read, *could* not have read, the letter. And the next moment she would be sure that he had read it. It seemed that she could not go on bearing such suspense for another hour. Yet she did bear it, not only through the night, but through other nights and days that followed in bleak procession.

Each morning she asked herself, How soon would she *know?* In what way would the blow fall? Would the Chinese cabinet be sent to the house? Would she be alone when it arrived, or would Larry be with her?

IT was not until the end of a week that a shock came which made past suspense seem happiness. The morning paper which (as usual now) she eagerly seized when Larry had gone, announced that Kingsley Blake had not signed a will which he had died in the act of making. The document was ready for signature, therefore the dead man's wishes concerning his property were known. His wife, however (who had been separated from him and living abroad), had heard of his illness, and returned from Paris to New York only a few days before what the newspaper called the "Tragedy." In consequence, she had been able to arrive promptly at Rivergrove and superintend arrangements for the funeral. The lady had informed an interviewer that she would dispose of the place with all its contents and let the town flat furnished; whereupon she would go back to France. Her intention was to have a sale by auction, on the spot, of all the treasures collected by her husband at Rivergrove.

There are some things which appear "too bad to be true." This was such a thing for Cecil.

The green lacquer Chinese cabinet was "one of the best bits" Blake had owned. It would be bought by a collector, and the secret drawer which she felt sure guarded her letters would be found.

Even if Blake hadn't labelled the envelope the signature "Cecil" would identify her to anyone who recalled the millionaire's pursuit of a young girl named Cecil Stainforth. That girl, only six months older, shivered and sickened as she remembered the phrasing in some of those letters. They had been written in gratitude for Blake's "kindness," which had tided her over a difficult pass; and, like an innocent idiot, she had at first believed him chivalrous and disinterested—an elderly knight glad to help an extravagant child out of a "scrape." But in the letters she had made appointments to meet the man, by his request; she had spoken of going to his flat. Afterwards, when he had "given himself away," the once chivalrous friend pointed out just how the letters would be misconstrued. He offered to hand them back—for a price; and perhaps Larry West had saved Cecil from paying that price. Now, it seemed that she would have to pay in another way, at last.

The thought brought the girl to her feet like a puppet on wires. The horror mustn't happen. She must prevent it. She would go to the sale and buy the Chinese cabinet herself!

It was later that the question of money came to her mind. She had no notion what the cabinet was worth. More than a thousand dollars, perhaps, and she had only about five hundred of her own which she could touch without appealing to Larry. He gave her two hundred a month for pocket-money, to spend (or save) as she chose. And the five hundred dollars had been saved. But they wouldn't go far towards buying the cabinet. The one hope of securing it would be—to pawn her jewels.

How to raise money on the pearls (which could not, of course, be sold) was a difficulty, since she dared ask advice of no one. But she searched newspapers, and found the address of a sort of super-pawnbroker. With this and the jewels in her handbag, Cecil took the first train to New York.

The advertiser had a shop, where jewels were sold as well as bought or taken in pledge. There was no humiliation in entering the place; still, Cecil was glad to be the only client of the moment. When she had stammered the purpose of her errand, she was taken to an inner room, and on a table spread with a velvet cloth she

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displayed her wares. Lumping the pearls and all the lesser things together, they were worth, Mr. Schermerhorn said, six thousand eight hundred dollars; but he would lend on them only a third of that amount. If she didn't care to accept his offer she could try elsewhere, but she would not get more. The man seemed honest, though hard, and she decided to deal with him. With the five hundred dollars she had saved she would have almost two thousand eight hundred. She might do worse. And there was so little time! As for redeeming her property, she would sell the Chinese cabinet after she had secured it—and emptied the secret drawer.

How to attend the sale at Kingsley Blake's house without being recognized and talked about was the next problem. But it had to be solved, and the girl did solve it in her mind before the money for the pawned jewels was in her purse. She went straight from Schermerhorn to Casenove, a theatrical costumier who had made her up for amateur plays before her marriage.

Cecil explained that it was a question of a comedy-drama in one act, for which a street costume was needed. She was not to be the young heroine, but a middle-aged woman, she added. "I want to be dark, and forty-five, and prim, and—and just *unnoticeable*. I'd love to surprise everyone by being so different from myself that no one would know me—except for my name on the programme. Can you make me like that?"

Willy Casenove ruffled his hair and screwed up his eyes, as he always did when straining after an inspiration. Suddenly it came.

Cecil desired Mr. Casenove to make her up, and then let her repeat the process herself under his direction. It was astonishing to see how easily youth and beauty were blotted out! When she had practised with the disguise to her own satisfaction and Casenove's, she bought all the necessary materials. Later, at a cheap store, she purchased such a costume, spectacles, hat, and veil as Casenove had recommended.

She would not risk having these things sent home, but directed that they should be kept till called for.

Her aunt, with whom she had lived as a girl, was still in New York, but Cecil could not make use of her house in the emergency she foresaw. There was another plan in her head, however, and she hastened to execute it.

A friend of old days, a young war widow, had gone to Philadelphia on a visit, and left her small flat shut up. Cecil got Kitty Ireland on the long-distance 'phone, and asked if she might use the flat now and then to rest in. The answer was "Yes," and Mrs. Ireland promised to post the key in a registered envelope that night.

Next day, when the letter came, Cecil was ready for the thing she had to do.

THE date of the sale was fixed for a certain Wednesday morning at eleven o'clock.

This would mean starting so early that her husband's curiosity would be aroused, for she must call at the store where her parcel waited, take it to Kitty Ireland's flat, and then transform herself from a beautiful, smart young woman into a middle-aged nonentity. But there was a way out of this trouble. Cecil 'phoned her aunt, asking for an invitation to spend Tuesday night. Having got it, she told Larry that Aunt Jane wanted her, and Larry made no objection to the visit. "I shall miss you, darling," he said, but that was all. Cecil was almost sure now, after this lapse of time, that he could not have read Blake's letter. She felt hatefully guilty in deceiving him, even in so small a thing as the motive for going to her aunt, but she no longer feared that he hid suspicion in his heart. If she could secure the Chinese cabinet the danger would be at an end.

She took Aunt Jane to a play, in order to have something to tell Larry about; but on Wednesday morning she was up before seven. She had a "lot of things to do," she truthfully told Miss Jane Stainforth when, at eight o'clock, she kissed that lady good-bye in bed.

Cecil realized during the train journey to Rivergrove that her disguise was a success. No one paid the slightest attention to the dowdy person in purple; no one cast sharp glances at the thick, patterned veil which shrouded that dowdy person's features.

She had never before attended an auction sale. She did not know what to do, nor whom to ask, but seeing a pile of catalogues, she took one and began to look through it. She tried to find the green lacquer Chinese cabinet, but in the crowd she was too confused to concentrate.

Cecil edged her way through the groups of queer or smart people, now and then recognizing an old acquaintance, and flushing under her veil, spectacles, and paint. At first she could not find the cabinet, and had a stab of fear lest Mrs. Blake had "reserved" it for herself. But, no; there it was, prominently placed! She had missed seeing it because the gorgeous thing was ringed about with admirers, and suddenly she lost hope. "I shall never get it!" she thought, and let herself be elbowed away. She drifted blindly, wishing she might sit down—just for a moment!—and rest. Perhaps she

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' Five thousand dollars ! "

It was her husband's stick which had raised

stumbled ; precisely what happened she did not know, but avoiding a fat woman she staggered against a tall man's shoulder.

' So sorry ! " said a voice.

It was Larry's voice. A wild stare through veil and spectacles showed her Larry's face.

Cecil caught back a cry. Larry there ! He must have guessed that she would come. He was watching for her. He would expect her to walk in, undisguised. Thank God he hadn't glanced twice at the woman in purple !

The girl had little fear of being recognized. But—her voice ! When, by and by, she had to bid, even with those absurd " plumpers " to disguise her voice, could she be sure—could she dare—— ?

' If I could get to the auctioneer," Cecil thought, " I might give him the name of Jones, say I want the Chinese cabinet, and tell him how high I can go, then I wouldn't have to speak out aloud."

But she could not get to the auctioneer, a powerful, alarming personality. He was aborbed in business. Larry had pressed to the front rank. She must stay where she was, and trust to luck !

The auctioneer rapped on a table with a hammer. The sale began. The first " lot " consisted of a large Chinese rug. Cecil was surprised to find that people didn't shout out their bids. Almost everything seemed to be done by signal. The auctioneer would call out a price which he had been offered. Then people would catch his eye and nod, or raise their hands.

The rug was ' knocked down " for a large sum to the fat woman against whom Cecil

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the bid. The other hands were still. The Chinese cabinet was Larry's.

had stumbled. Another lot was offered, and so it went on.

At last! "Lot one hundred and one, unique green lacquer Chinese cabinet, period early-eighteenth century, most magnificent piece on display in this sale-room," bawled the raucous voice. "I am offered the ridiculously small sum of two thousand dollars."

Before Cecil could collect her wits after the shock, a big-nosed, dark man signalled. "Two thousand two hundred!" announced the auctioneer.

She tried to catch his eye, as other people did, but someone else had caught it. "Two thousand four hundred!"

She must speak now, or never. She opened dry lips, but no sound came. She tried to push forward, but instead fell back a step. Larry had grown alert. He lifted his stick. *He was bidding for the Chinese cabinet*—and that meant—it meant that he had *known* all along. *He had read Kingsley Blake's letter!*

Two thousand six hundred.

Each time the bids seemed to go up mechanically by two hundred dollars. But why shouldn't she bid more—all she had to bid? When Larry saw an inoffensive, elderly woman trying to buy the cabinet for such a high price perhaps he would let it go.

"I bid two thousand eight hundred dollars!" she heard a voice that was hers, yet not hers, rasp out.

Nearly everyone stared, except Larry. He did not appear to care.

"Two thousand eight hundred is the offer!" yelled the auctioneer.

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It seemed to Cecil that there was a pause. She had done the right thing by risking all she had at a bound. The Chinese cabinet would be knocked down to Mrs. Jones!

But, no. The sum which looked immense to her was not prohibitive for others. Hands went up, hands that had not gone up before. Larry's stick was still; the offer was three thousand—three thousand three hundred—it was three thousand six hundred, and then—Larry made a sign.

Frozen, Cecil stood still and listened to the fight. Her sole hope now was one which would have seemed monstrous yesterday—that a stranger might secure the cabinet. She would find his name and address. She would go to him. She would invent some story. Or, she would tell the truth and implore secrecy—anything, to have in her hands the contents of the hidden drawer.

Four thousand dollars the bidding had reached now—four thousand five hundred. Oh, surely Larry would stop! He wasn't rich. Even if he were mad with jealousy he could not afford——

"Five thousand dollars!"

It was her husband's stick which had raised the bid. The other hands were still. The Chinese cabinet was Larry's.

THERE was just enough conscious life left in Cecil West to make her realize the need of reaching home quickly. She slipped out of the sale-room and rushed to the station. Five minutes later a train steamed in. Cecil glanced about. She did not see Larry on the platform. At least, she had a start!

But, in the train, she wondered. Why was she in such haste to go home and face Larry there? Why should she *ever* go home? Why face him at all? Why be tortured by reproaches, why suffer the shame of defending herself in vain?

Instead, she might—when she had got rid of her disguise—take refuge with her aunt and write to Larry. She actually decided to do this, but when, at Kitty Ireland's flat, the purple woman had become Cecil West again, a flame of desperate courage fired her veins. She must see Larry.

Hesitating no longer, she took the first available train for home.

On the hall table lay a telegram. Cecil opened it mechanically. It was from Larry!

> Have bought you a present hope you will like. Making special job get it delivered to-day, almost sure succeed. Expect large piece furniture. Green Chinese lacquer. Arrange place wherever you choose. Fear I may be detained in town later than usual, but will arrive seven-thirty. Glad if you can delay dinner till eight. Love.—LARRY.

This from the man whom she had expected to burst in upon her with the discovered letters to Kingsley Blake in his hand!

Late in the afternoon two men in a motor brought the Chinese cabinet to the house, and carried the heavy thing upstairs to her little sitting-room. Kingsley Blake had asked if she had a "den" of her own which the green lacquer cabinet would suit. Now, here it stood in that "den"; but she hated the thing, and hated to have it there. Had there not been need to lock a door upon herself and it, she would have had the Chinese cabinet left in the hall!

There was this need. Yet she did not now expect to find the packet of letters. She thought that Larry must have taken them, and sent the cabinet home while she was alone to let her look for the drawer and discover it—empty. Still, she searched. Hope never quite dies.

One of the men in the motor had handed her a sealed envelope which contained a queer, foreign-looking key. With this she opened the cabinet, and saw many drawers of different sizes, some above, some below, some at the sides of a delicately-pillared miniature archway, which gave the interior the effect of a desk.

It was only half-past six o'clock when Cecil began her quest, and Larry was not due, according to his telegram, till seven-thirty. But—could she trust that telegram? What if, in spite of it, Larry meant to surprise her with the door locked—the door which was never locked!—and catch her with all the drawers of the cabinet scattered about?

It didn't seem like Larry to play so cruel a trick. But—after all these days, when he had *known* and kept silent, what *was* like Larry?

She worked with frantic haste, tearing out the numerous drawers and groping behind them. Nothing! No concealed spring under the arched space. The letters must have been kept in a drawer that was *not* secret! They might have been read and annexed by anyone!

A wave of anger against the dead man swept over the girl, and it was just then that something seemed to say "Pull the left-hand pillar!" She obeyed. It moved forward, bringing into view a narrow receptacle of which it was the front. Within lay a large envelope, so closely fitted into its hiding-place that it was with difficulty she drew it out.

"Six letters from C. S.," she read, written large in Blake's scrawling hand. The envelope was fastened with his seal. Cecil broke it, and drew out a packet of letters—six letters on monogramed, pale blue paper—her own monogram, her own paper. She read

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them through with repugnance, with self-pity, then threw them in the grate, set a match to one, and watched the whole six burn.

As the last edge of blue turned brown, the hall clock downstairs struck the quarter past seven. Her search for the secret drawer, her discovery, her reading and destruction of the letters, had taken just three-quarters of an hour!

There was no time to dress. Larry would come in a few minutes now. But she did not wish to dress. It would be like a criminal putting on evening clothes to receive sentence!

Swiftly Cecil slipped the pillar into place. She had nearly forgotten! She stared into the mirror over the mantelpiece. How white she was! But what did it matter?

The front door slammed. Larry's voice called: "Hallo, where are you, sweetheart?"

"*Sweetheart!*"

It was the first time that Cecil had not been waiting to rush out as his key grated in the lock.

Now she grasped the banister-rail to steady herself as she crept downstairs.

"Well, my kid!" he hailed her, cheerily, and caught her in his arms before she had reached the last step. "Did you get my present all right?"

"Yes—I got it," she faltered. Then tears stung her eyes. Words spoke themselves. "Oh, Larry—believe that I love you! I've always been true. I——"

"Of course, baby!" he laughed. "Come into the study, and we'll talk about that—and about how much I love *you*."

Arm round her waist, he led his wife into his special "den." He bent as if for a kiss, then paused, her face between his hands, his own face close.

"No—mustn't kiss you till I've confessed and been forgiven!" he stopped himself.

Cecil was dumb with surprise.

"But I bet I *shall* be forgiven!" Larry went on. "Because I didn't mean to do the thing. It did itself—and there it was! Don't know what you thought of me—but I kept mum till I could atone. To-day's the day. I have atoned—best way I could! I got you that Chinese cabinet at the sale of Kingsley Blake's things. You see, before I knew, I'd read that letter of his—thought it was for me at first, you remember! Then there came the news about his will not being signed—and the sale. So I made up my mind you should have the legacy, that's all. Now, do I get that kiss?"

Her arms wrapped his neck. She held him as if she would never let him go. Some day he should hear the true story. But she would not spoil this glorious moment, for, at last, she knew the mystery of Larry. Where he loved he trusted.

ACROSTICS.

OUR twentieth series of acrostics begins with No. 105. printed below, and will run for four months. Prizes to the value of twelve guineas are offered.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 105.

THE flowers of spring that now appear
Tell us that summer, too, is near.

1. The opposite of shallow take.
2. Good at addition is the snake.
3. Fragile and weak. One letter goes.
4. Six feet, as every schoolboy knows.
5. Protector he, in bygone day.
6. Act twice. The bird has passed away.
7. Goddess, of sunshine born and rain.
8. Length without breadth. There goes the train.
9. The clothes wherein we are arrayed
   Are four—club, diamond, heart, and spade.

PAX.

Answers to No. 105 *must reach the Acrostic Editor,* THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, not later than by the first post on April* 10*th.*

One alternative answer may be sent to each light. At the foot every solver should write his pseudonym, consisting of one word.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 104.

SCHOOL, stage, and life in town its pages show:
The tale appeared some eighty years ago.

1. Your name, here writ, and shortened, now we meet;
   Victor and then three more the line complete.
2. Stranger and exile, yet a faithful friend
   When monarch had with treason to contend.
3. Archbishop, canon, curate, vicar, dean,
   He comes with step sedate and reverend mien.
4. Caroline, surely, and it seems we may
   Feel certain that the lady had some hay.
5. A Scottish tree (if one may use such phrase)
   Recalls a scholar versed in ancient ways.
6. Food rearrange—a story known to fame:
   This by itself reveals the second name.
7. Four little words; less than one word; to read
   The place's name, two letters more we need.
8. 'Tis often yours, and yet not owned by you,
   Since anagram of instrument will do.

PAX.

1.	N	orma	N
2.	I	tta	I
3.	C	leri	C
4.	H	erric	K
5.	O	chi	L
6.	L	ittl	E
7.	A	ramari	B
8.	S	incerel	Y

NOTES.—Light 1. What is your name? N. or M.; "and" shortened. Victor, William the Conqueror. 2. Friend of David, Absalom's rebellion. 4. Caroline, belonging to the time of King Charles. Her rick. 5. Ochiltree. Scott, The Antiquary. 6. Rice; Eric, or, Little by Little. 7. Paramaribo. 8. Yours sincerely; since lyre.

"Yodelling" is accepted for the first light of No. 102.

Solvers are requested to send, with their answers to No. 105, their real names and addresses also. These should be written at the back of their solutions, except in the case of postcards.

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VISUAL HUMOUR
SIGHTS THAT CHILDREN LAUGH AT



By
Dr. C. W. KIMMINS
For many years Chief Education Inspector of the L.C.C.

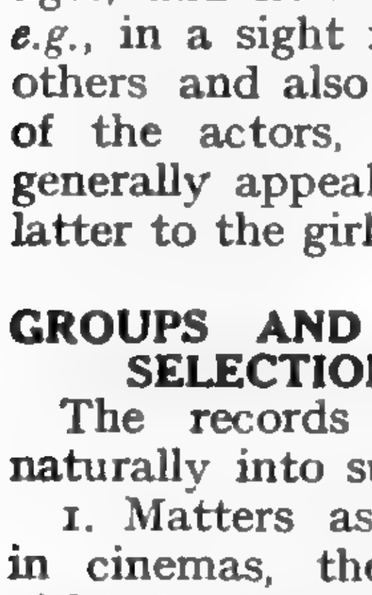
IN THE STRAND MAGAZINE for January of this year an article appeared by the author on "The Sense of Humour in Children," in which he dealt with the result of an investigation of the appreciation of funny stories and jokes by children of different ages. The present article deals with their appreciation of humorous elements in the sights of everyday life. For the purpose of this further investigation, children were asked late in the Michaelmas term of 1921 to give an account of the funniest sight they had seen since the summer holidays. Some thousands of records were received and analysed. As in each case the age and name were given, it was possible to discover what type of humorous situation caused most amusement to children of different ages, and how the appeal varied with sex; *e.g.*, in a sight involving the misfortunes of others and also the quaint, funny costumes of the actors, the former element would generally appeal more to the boys and the latter to the girls.



GROUPS AND DIFFERENCES IN THE SELECTION OF FUNNY SIGHTS.

The records of the funny sights fall naturally into such groups as:—

1. Matters associated with performances in cinemas, theatres, concerts, boys' and girls' clubs, music-halls, circuses, etc.
2. Punch and Judy shows.
3. The behaviour of domesticated animals.
4. The behaviour of animals in the Zoo.
5. A great variety of street scenes with humorous elements, including incidents in shops, trams, and buses.
6. Scenes in which "dressing-up" plays an important part, such as carnivals, Guy Fawkes, celebrations, and jazz bands.



Among the differences observed are: (1) That at all ages boys select more funny sights seen in cinemas and other places of entertainment than the girls. At eleven years of age the hold of the cinema is greatest with boys and girls. (2) Punch and Judy shows are far more popular with boys than with girls. At seven years of age this is very striking. (3) The doings of domesticated animals vary in popularity from age to age. (4) Girls of seven and eight select more funny scenes from the behaviour of animals in the Zoo than the boys, whereas at nine, ten, and eleven years of age the appeal to the boys is greater in this respect. (5) Funny scenes concerned with "dressing-up" are far more popular with girls than with boys at all ages. (6) From eleven to fourteen years of age Guy Fawkes' celebrations make a greater appeal to the boys and girls than at any other period.

THE LAUGHTER OF VERY YOUNG CHILDREN.

Laughter generally accompanies surprise followed by relief from restraint. This is well shown by the great popularity with infants of the various forms of Peep-bo, and such toys as Jack-in-the-box. At a very early stage the misfortunes of others is a powerful element in provoking laughter, as will be seen by the following records of the funniest sights selected:—



1. A child of four: "I saw a man in a motor-car run over a duck, and the duck said 'Quack, quack.'"
2. Children of five years of age:—

(*a*) "At the pictures Charlie Chaplin was riding in a motor, then he

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ran into another motor, and both cars ran into the water. Charlie Chaplin was drowned."

(*b*) "I saw a fat man running for a bus. He jumped on but he couldn't hold on, and he fell off into the mud. Oh! I did laugh."

3. A girl of six: "I saw a duck who got his head stuck in a jam-pot, and he walked about with the jam-pot on his head."

4. A boy of seven: "The funniest sight I have seen is when my mother fell out of the hammock, but she didn't hurt herself much."

Of a class of thirty-five children from six to six and a half years of age, the selection of funniest sights was as follows:—

Punch and Judy shows	12
Jazz bands in streets	8
Dancing dolls in streets	7
Decorated cars in carnivals	5
Sheep driven through streets ..	3

Up to the age of seven humorous situations which cause laughter are almost entirely visual.



Popular cinema films have their street exponents and secure great favour among the children.

THE CALL OF THE STREET.

The street at the present time makes a more powerful call to the child than at any previous period of his life. The drab, dull, monotonous outlook has been changed to an extraordinary degree as a result of the war. Carnivals, some of a very elaborate and, to the child, attractive nature, are frequently to be seen having as their objective the raising of funds for local hospitals or other charitable purposes. Performances of strolling players organized by sections of the unemployed, jazz bands, and every conceivable form of street entertainment for the purpose of raising money enliven the streets to an extent unknown in pre-war times. Popular cinema films, especially Charlie Chaplin and the Kid, have their street exponents, and, judging from the records of funniest sights seen, secure great favour among the children. The keenness of the

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London child, by nature an inveterate pleasure-seeker, may be illustrated by the experience of a boy who, at an early stage of a performance, said : " I laughed so much that I burst my trousers, and had to run home to get them mended, but I ran all the way, and got back before the end of the show." The Guy Fawkes' celebrations were far more numerous and elaborate than in former years.

All these street activities form a joyous continuation of that fairyland of childhood in which the child lives far longer than is generally appreciated. Apart from the misfortunes of others which bulk so largely iu the comic experiences of early life, the child's unconscious protest against convention finds expression. The grotesque appearance of the clown, the quaint costumes of boys dressed as girls, men dressed as women, painted faces, and the human representations of all types of animals link on quite naturally to the delightful fairy stories of earlier days. Moreover, many of the actions performed by the comic man in the street run counter to all the rules and regulations of the home and the schoolroom, and this gives an added joy to the entertainment.

In giving illustrations of the funny sights, the language of the children is retained but, for obvious reasons, the spelling of certain words is modified. Here are descriptions of some of the street incidents :—

(*a*) " The funniest thing I saw was a carnival. There was a cart with a bear standing at the back of it. When the cart went along the bear went up and down. There were all sorts of chains of flowers made round the cart and inside there were beds and in these beds there were babies playing with toys, and there were three bears and the bears were sleeping together in one big bed. In the cart there were nurses looking after the babies and there were two nurses minding the three bears. When it was gone there were lots of funny things I noticed, and it was very grand indeed."

(*b*) " An old man was dressed as a rather peculiar-looking Scotchman wearing a Scotch ' tam ' several sizes too small, an extremely short kilt and both socks hanging down. He was followed by two people dressed as ghosts swathed in white sheets. In their hands they carried empty whisky bottles and they each wore a large card with the words ' departed spirits ' printed on them. In the procession there was a great tall man dressed up as a baby in arms. He had a baby's hat perched on the side of his head tied under his chin by an enormous white bow. He had on what looked like a lady's nightdress, and he was sucking at a large baby's feeder."

(*c*) " The funniest thing I have seen was a party of carol-singers standing singing when a strange dog came along and tried to sing with them. It did not bark but made a strange noise in its throat as if singing. But it was funnier still when a cat came along and sat on a wall near by and started meowing. This was too much for the poor carol-singers."

DOMESTIC SCENES.

The affairs of the home cannot compete with the call of the street in affording mirth-producing material. The normal attitude of parents to young children is well illustrated by an extract from one of the records :—

" Elsie and Jeanie, my two little sisters, were playing in the garden ; they were so quiet that mother told me to go and see what they were doing, for she was sure they were doing something naughty."

The comic incidents are largely concerned with the doings of very young children and the animals in the home. The following extracts from records are typical :—

(*a*) " A few days ago when my mother had a new born baby her other baby started crying, and that made me laugh because he thought my mother was not going to love him any more but love the other baby. He went in the kitchen and got the cane to hit it, but the nurse took the cane away from him."

(*b*) " I saw a boy chasing a poor cat. As he was running he fell and burst the seat of his trousers, and so instead of hurting the cat he'll get hurt himself when he sees his mother."

(*c*) " I saw a spider's web in our kitchen. I did put upon it a fly and the spider came running out and wrapped him up and ate him for his tea. It made me laugh."

(*d*) " The crabs were put on the floor and my cat came in. She sprang on them and the crabs bit the cat's nose, and one of the crabs clung on to her nose until my grandad came to the rescue. We shrieked with laughter."

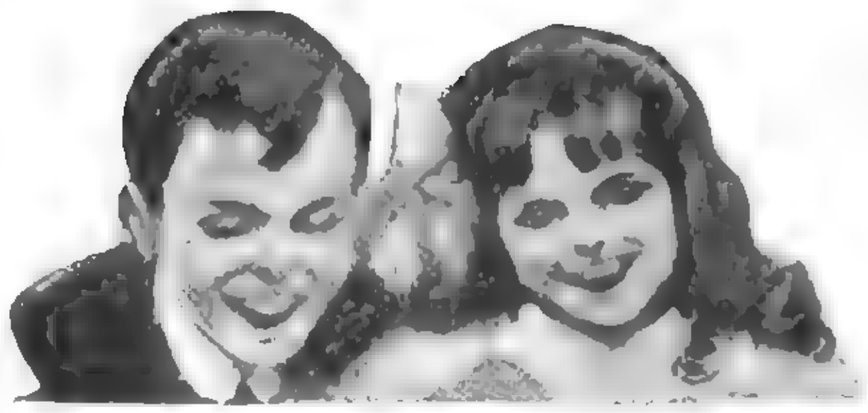
(*e*) " At home we have a puppy and a kitten ; they are both very friendly with one another, especially the kitten. One day when the fire was very bright Molly, the dog, was lying down in front of the fire asleep when the kitten came in. He was not so sleepy, and after cleaning himself he began washing the dog."

Four of the above records were written by children of eight years of age.

Very few references are made to the father in the home, and these generally refer to misfortunes which occur to him, as *e.g.* : A father promised to go and see his son swim at the swimming bath. He went there and inquired for his son. The boy was swimming,

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and on climbing out of the bath to greet his father he slipped, and clutching one of his father's legs both fell into the water. The record concludes, "Everybody laughed except my father."



We shrieked with laughter as—

NATURAL HISTORY.

Nothing can exceed the delight of the poor London child who goes into the country for the first time. Every sight is a new experience, and in the description of the incidents of country life the imagination of the child has full play, and supplies material of which the ordinary naturalist is ignorant. A young child who saw for the first time a man milking a cow was so overjoyed that she asked him to "pour the milk back and do it again." In the records two children gave the hedgehog and the squirrel as the funniest sights they had seen. Here are their quaint accounts of these animals :—

(*a*) "The hedgehog lives in the country. It is a clever little thing. Whenever a cow lies down to have a sleep the little hedgehog crawls up beside him. The cow is very heavy, and he presses the ground down. When the little worms feel the cow on top of them they come out of their holes to see what it is. The hedgehog knows what is going to happen, so he looks out for all the worms that he can possibly find. When he has had enough to eat he crawls away. Foxes are very fond of hedgehogs, and they would eat them if they could, but they cannot reach them."

(*b*) "The funniest sight I have ever seen is the squirrel which hops from tree to tree and eats acorns. They are tiny little things and they have bushy tails. In the night they hide in a hollow tree and go fast asleep. In the morning they fly about the street and the mother squirrel makes the breakfast and the father goes to work. In the night he comes home for supper and then goes to bed."

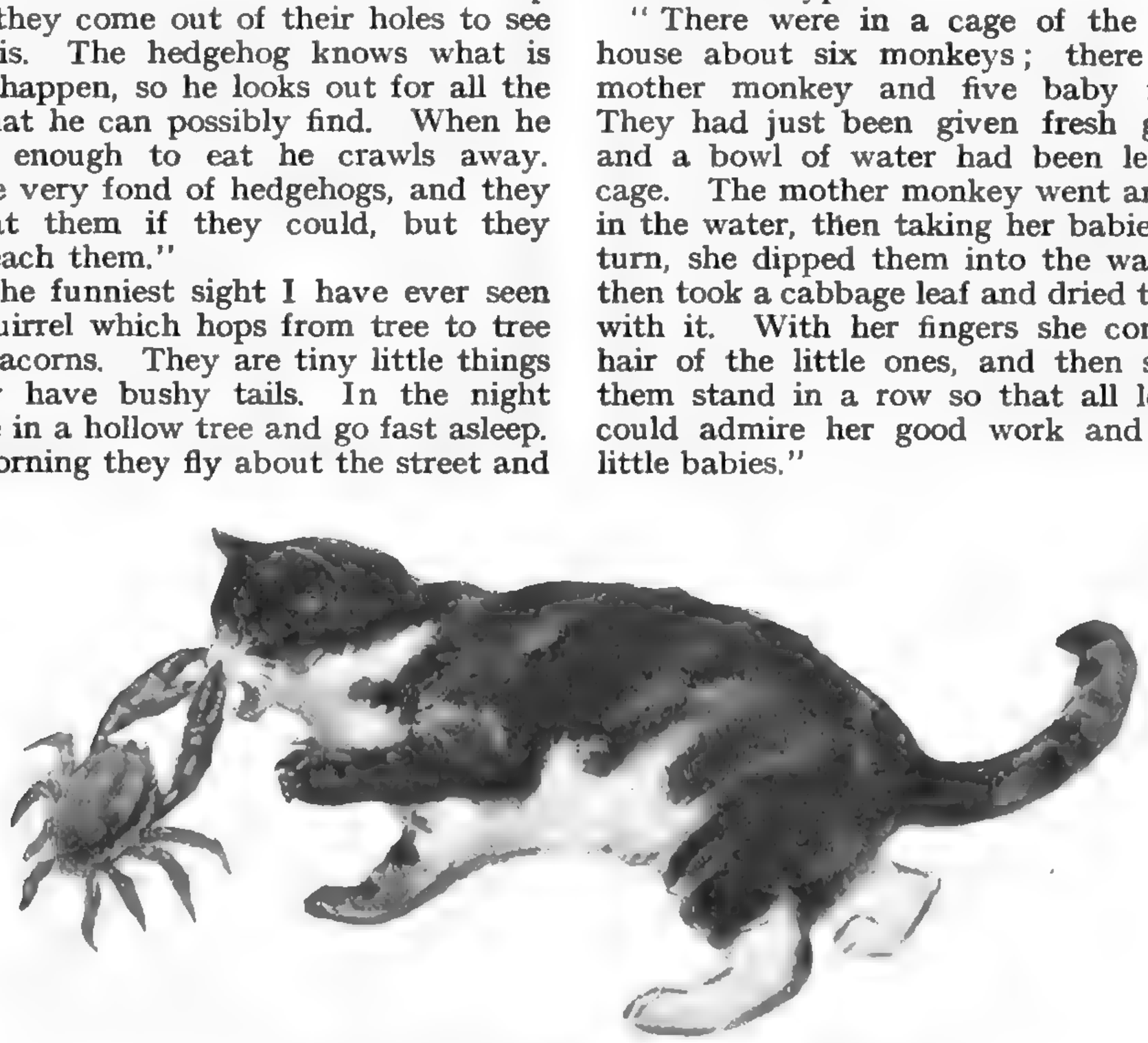
THE CHILD AT THE ZOO.

London children revel in the Zoo, but their special interests are limited. They concentrate almost entirely on the monkey-house and the elephants, with occasional references to the parrot-house. The lions, tigers, buffaloes, giraffes, bears, snakes, birds, and other groups of animals are hardly mentioned in the essays the children write on the Zoo.

A personal experience in one of the records is of an interesting nature. An elephant on which the child was riding investigated an unoccupied perambulator from which the smell of biscuits emanated. Unable to reach them, he turned over the perambulator, raised it by his trunk, and shook it, thus releasing a bag of biscuits which he consumed amid the laughter of the children.

Of the many records of the doings in the monkey-house, the following example may be taken as typical :—

"There were in a cage of the monkey-house about six monkeys; there was the mother monkey and five baby monkeys. They had just been given fresh greenstuff and a bowl of water had been left in the cage. The mother monkey went and looked in the water, then taking her babies each in turn, she dipped them into the water. She then took a cabbage leaf and dried the babies with it. With her fingers she combed the hair of the little ones, and then she made them stand in a row so that all lookers-on could admire her good work and also her little babies."



—one of the crabs clung on to the cat's nose.

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HUMOURS OF THE TRAM AND THE BUS.

Many children mention as the funniest sight they have seen incidents of the tram and bus, of which the following are instances :

(*a*) " I saw a man preparing to leap off a bus which was going at a pretty good speed. He jumped and, as luck would have it, alighted on a banana-skin. Needless to say, he turned a complete somersault and fell on his back in the muddy road. His hat went bowling down the road until another bus ran over it, and when the owner managed to get it it was a hopeless wreck."

(*b*) " The funniest thing I have seen was a lady hanging on to a bus. She dropped her sugar, cheese, butter, milk, eggs, jam, and other things. She also bruised her leg."

(*c*) " I was sitting next to a little boy in a tram who would keep on sniffing. A rather old gentleman who was sitting on the other side of him said : ' Haven't you a handkerchief ? ' ' Yes,' answered the little boy, ' but mother told me not to lend it to anyone.' Everybody in the tram burst out in laughter, because the little boy thought that the gentleman wanted it to blow his own nose on it."

ABSENT-MINDEDNESS.

Bergson refers to absent-mindedness as one of the great watersheds of laughter. This is especially true of humorous incidents in adult life. In the children's records, however, there are also good examples ; *e.g.* :—

(*a*) " The funniest thing I have ever seen happened one night at home. While we were sitting round the fire we suddenly heard a knock on the door, so I went up and opened it. It was a little girl who wanted my sister. Now my sister did not want to go out, so my mother told me to go up and say that she was out. As I was just going upstairs to tell her my sister said, ' I'll go.' So she went up and told her herself and came downstairs without knowing what she had done."



The mother monkey made the little ones stand in a row so that all lookers-on could admire her good work.

(*b*) " I saw a gentleman who was walking along the pavement. It was very foggy and dark, and he ran straight into a pillar-box and he apologized. People who were there simply roared with laughter at him."

(*c*) " A lady went into church and went right up to her pew with her umbrella up."

(*d*) " A careless man was walking under a crane and the hook of the crane caught hold of the man's jacket and pulled him up. I laughed very much because he was going higher and higher."

A girl with her coat on her arm was hunting everywhere for it when her six-

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year-old sister called her attention to it with the quaint remark, " Your brains must have gone to sleep."

DISTORTING MIRRORS.

A continual source of merriment to young children is the distorting mirror (convex and concave) so often to be found in places of amusement. On one occasion the merriment was much increased by the sight of a small boy feeling his body to see whether he was really as fat as he appeared in the mirror.

THE VALUE OF A STUDY OF LAUGHTER.

There is a great literature on the subject of laughter. All experts are agreed as to its physiological value, but there are well-marked differences of opinion as to the exact nature of its psychology. The views of Freud, Bergson, Boris Sidis, and Sully, who have written fully on the subject, are well known and have been the basis of discussions of the greatest interest.

The study of visual humour is of the highest importance from a scientific point of view, because there is, in this connection, an unbroken chain from the baby's first laugh to the last laugh of old age. The humorous appreciation of written material naturally cannot start before the child has acquired the art of reading, and the genuine witticism does not appear until a much later stage. To the student of child-psychology the investigation of visual humour is the Open Sesame to much valuable evidence of the mental make-up of the developing boy or girl. Anything in the nature of the suppression of the child's appreciation of humour may have disastrous results.



"The funniest thing I have seen."

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THE SINISTER QUEST OF NORMAN GREYES

by

E·PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

No. 5.—THE THREE MALEFACTORS.

By JANET.

IT was about four months after I had been in the service—how I hate the phrase!—of Mrs. Trumperton-Smith, that I decided to rob her. I first went to her because, day by day, I felt the need of money for those luxuries to which I had become accustomed. After my disastrous visit to Paris, no news whatever had come to me from my husband. A slack period had set in at the dressmaking establishment where I had been employed, and I was informed that my services were no longer necessary. I spent a month at a manicurist's and a few weeks at a photographic studio. I left them for the same reason. I have killed a man with my own hand and been a partner in more than one robbery, but the one virtue of my plebeian ancestors has remained—an uncomfortable, sometimes an almost accursed gift. I have never lost my self-respect. The touch of an unloved hand upon my fingers awakens in me at once a passionate repugnance. It was that feeling which was responsible for my one great crime.

Mrs. Trumperton-Smith advertised in the *Morning Post* for a companion-lady's-maid. I secured the post on account of my manners and appearance, but I soon found that the duties which I was expected to fill pertained far more to the latter position than the former. My mistress was a lady of ample person and ample means. She lived in excellent style and apparently had plenty of money. She was a widow about forty-five years old, still good-looking in a florid sort of way, and well enough educated from the middle-class point of view. She wasted no time upon pets. Men were her one and everlasting hobby. She was not difficult to please, but in a general way she preferred them young and silly. I do not think that matrimony ever entered into her designs. I gathered later on that she had been ill-treated by two husbands, each of whom, however, had left her a substantial fortune.

We were staying at the Magnificent Hotel at Brighton when the idea which I have mentioned, of robbing my mistress, first took definite shape in my mind. I should have bided my time, I think, but for two reasons. One was that the salary which she paid me was absurdly small and I saw no chance of saving anything, and the other was the very imminent fear of being anticipated. Mrs. Trumperton-Smith was not always so discreet as she should have been in her acquaintances. At the present time she was on exceedingly friendly terms with a Mr. Sidney Bloor, whom I put down, from the moment I first saw him, as an undoubted adventurer. He was young and rather pimply-faced, with weak eyebrows and eyelashes, small, cunning eyes, a vapid expression but an acquisitive mouth. He was always dressed in the height of fashion, and he had acquired the shibboleth of the up-to-date young man of the moment. Mrs. Trumperton-Smith admired and believed in him. I mistrusted and despised him. He made languid attempts to kiss me whenever he found me alone in the sitting-room, attempts which I always managed to evade without exaggerated prudery, and without thinking it necessary to refuse the frequent tips which his position as my mistress's declared admirer seemed to render my due. I knew exactly what he was after, though. I had seen his covetous eyes light up when my mistress had more than usually overladen

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her portly person with some of the magnificent jewels in which a portion of her large means was invested. I had seen him make mental calculations as to their value with a greedy, almost ferocious light in his unpleasant eyes. There was a particular diamond necklace which seemed to move him more than any other of her possessions. I felt sure that, when he made his attempt, it would be this necklace which he would endeavour to secure.

He found me one evening, some four months after our arrival in Brighton, alone in the sitting-room at about the hour when madam was sometimes pleased to dispense cocktails. A spasmodic attempt at gallantry having been met and repulsed, he lingered to watch me busily repairing a hair ornament which my mistress desired to wear that evening.

"Where is the old bird?" he asked, confidentially.

I did not discourage this familiarity as I should have done, because I was really anxious to make a guess at his plans.

"Madam is out playing bridge with some friends," I told him.

"What little gew-gaws are you sending her down in to-night?" he inquired, with affected carelessness.

"Whatever she chooses to wear," I replied.

"Only last night," he remarked, "she told me that it was generally you who made the selection."

"She usually does wear what I put out," I assented. "Which do you admire her in most, Mr. Bloor?"

The young man scratched his chin thoughtfully. All the amorousness of the bar-room lounger was in his tone and expression as he glanced down at me.

"It doesn't matter to me what she wears," he sighed. "I know a little girl, though, who would look the real thing decked out in those diamonds, eh?"

"I expect you have a large acquaintance amongst my sex," I replied, demurely.

"Wasn't thinking of anyone farther away than this room," he assured me. "You're a dam' good-looking girl, you know, Janet."

"Do you think so, Mr. Bloor?" I ventured, without looking up.

"I do, indeed," he insisted, edging a little nearer towards me. "I say, go and fetch them just for a joke, and try them on. I'd like to see how they look on that white throat of yours."

"And have madam come in and send me away without notice! No, thank you, Mr. Bloor!"

"If you lost your job through me," he declared, magniloquently, "I should take good care to make it up to you."

"Your way of making it up might not appeal to me," I answered.

"You're a cold young woman, Janet," he complained. "My last evening, too."

"Are you going away?"

"Back to the City to-morrow. I'm my own master and all that, of course—take a week or two just when I want it—but one has to pick up a bit of the rhino now and then. We haven't all got Mrs. Trumperton-Smith's money."

"If it is really your last night," I said, "tell me what jewellery you would like the mistress to wear this evening, and I will put it out for her."

He affected to treat the matter with indifference, but it was obviously what he had been leading up to.

"What about the diamond necklace, then?" he suggested. "She's coming to dine at my table, so I ought to have a say. The diamond necklace, ear-rings, and bracelet! What-ho! We sha'n't need any other illumination!"

"I will do my best," I promised him.

My mistress came bustling in, a moment or two later, and busied herself making the cocktails. I went through into her bedroom to lay out her gown. It was perfectly clear to me now that if I were going to rob Mrs. Trumperton-Smith at all, it had better be done quickly. Mr. Sidney Bloor's choice showed that he had a very fair idea of the value of jewels.

THE drinking of cocktails was concluded a little more quickly than usual, and Mrs. Trumperton-Smith joined me in the bedroom, full of what passed with her as geniality. She was always agreeable when things had been going her way, and she had a certain florid good-nature which made her popular in the hotel and amongst her casual acquaintances. It was a quality, however, which was entirely superficial, and in a general way I found her disagreeable, selfish, and jealous to a degree. Her whole expression altered as she submitted herself to my ministrations.

"How long had Mr. Bloor been here?" she asked.

"About five minutes, madam."

"Another time," she said, stiffly, "it would be more seemly if you brought any work you had to do, in here, whilst he was waiting for me."

"Very good, madam."

"And what a mess you've made of this aigrette!" she went on. "I don't think I shall ever wear it again."

"I have arranged it exactly according to your instructions, madam," I told her.

"Don't answer me, woman," she snapped. "And be careful with my hair on the left

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side. You're making me look a perfect fright. . . . Here!"

She withdrew the key of her jewel-case from a bracelet, and passed it to me.

"As madam is wearing black," I said, "I thought she would prefer the diamonds."

"Bring them along and don't talk so much," was the curt reply.

I selected the diamond necklace, ear-rings, and bracelet, locked up the case, and returned the key. My mistress's expression softened as she looked at herself in the glass.

"I really think," she reflected, with a little sigh, "that black does become me."

"I have heard a great many people say so, madam," I assured her.

She picked up her gold bag, looked inside to see that I had placed her handkerchief there, and turned away.

"See that the fire is kept up in the sitting-room, Janet," she ordered. "Mr. Bloor and I will take our coffee there."

"Very good, madam," I replied.

I went into the steward's room and had my supper as usual, and I also paid a visit to Mr. Bloor's bedroom and borrowed certain trifles which I proposed to use later on. It was not yet clear to me by what means the young man was scheming to possess himself of the jewels, but I was quite convinced that the attempt itself would be made that night. I happened to know that both he and Mrs. Trumperton-Smith were engaged to play bridge after dinner at a neighbouring hotel, and I was quite sure that it was the jewels she was wearing, rather than those left in her case, upon which he had designs. I contrived to leave open the connecting door between the bedroom and sitting-room, and to be in the former when they returned for their coffee. Madam had come in for her cloak and they were on the point of starting out again, when her escort at last gave me the cue for which I had been waiting.

"I say, Mimi," he drawled—he called her "Mimi," although she weighed fourteen stone—"I don't feel comfortable walking along the front with you in those diamonds. Leave them behind, there's a dear. All those women at the Royal wear flashy jewellery. You'll look much more the real thing with none on at all."

"Just as you like, dear," she assented, meekly. "Perhaps you're right, especially if we go on to supper afterwards. Here, Janet!"

I hurried out.

"Yes, madam?"

"Take these off—all of them," she directed, extending her arms and poising her neck. "I am going out and may be late."

I relieved her of the jewels. All the time Mr. Bloor was watching with a gleam in his eyes.

"If you will give me your key, madam, I will lock them up," I suggested.

I could judge that this was the critical moment for Mr. Bloor. He had gambled



"Here, Janet! Take these diamonds off—Mr. Bloor was

correctly, however, upon Mrs. Trumperton-Smith's general indolence.

"Oh, that will do when I get back," she said. "Put them in one of the drawers, Janet."

They went off together. I did exactly as I had been bidden, and afterwards lingered in the sitting-room whilst I completed my plans. I had just come to a decision when there was a sharp knock at the door. The manager of the hotel—a Mr. Léon Grant—made his appearance. He looked around the empty sitting-room.

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"I understood that Mrs. Trumperton-Smith was up here," he said, courteously.

"Mrs. Trumperton-Smith went out some little time ago," I told him. "I think she has gone into the Royal Hotel to play bridge."

He seemed disappointed. He was a thin, rather nervous-looking person, with a very agreeable face and manner, but with lines about his eyes and a general air of over-anxiety. It was rumoured that the hotel was not doing quite so well as some of its rivals, a state of affairs which he felt keenly.

"What time do you expect your mistress back?" he inquired.

"She did not say, sir," I replied. "The last time she went out to play bridge, it was about one o'clock when she returned. Mr. Bloor is with her."

The manager nodded and turned away.

"Can I give her any message, sir?" I added.

He hesitated, closed the door, and came back again.

"I should imagine," he said, looking at me attentively, "that you are a trusted servant."

"I was engaged as companion-lady's-maid, sir," I told him. "I believe that my mistress has every confidence in me."

He nodded.

"To tell you the truth," he explained, "I am a little worried about your mistress's jewels. There was a small robbery last night at an hotel in the neighbourhood, and I have had an indirect sort of warning from the police that there are thieves about. Mrs. Trumperton-Smith has the reputation of being very careless. I came to ask her if she would allow me to keep her jewels in the hotel safe."

"I should be very glad if you could persuade her to do so, sir," I assured him. "I suggested it when we arrived, but madam likes to take them out and look at them when she is alone."

"It is scarcely fair upon any hotel," the manager pointed out, a little querulously.



all of them," she directed, extending her arms and poising her neck. All the time watching with a gleam in his eyes.

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"Will you be so kind as to tell me where she keeps them?"

I showed him the case, although I said nothing of the diamonds in the drawer. He frowned severely.

"It is placing temptation in people's way," he declared.

"The door of the bedroom is always locked," I reminded him, "and you have a night-watchman. Then, too, we are on the fourth storey——"

"My dear young woman," he interrupted, irritably, "those things are nothing to an experienced thief. The hotel safe is the only place for such jewellery as Mrs. Trumperton-Smith possesses. I shall wait upon her to-morrow morning and tell her so."

He said good night pleasantly and left me. I went back to my room, undressed, and donned a complete suit of Mr. Bloor's evening clothes, and theatre hat, which I had taken the liberty of borrowing from his room. At the time when I knew that the night-watchman's back was turned, I slipped out, descended a few of the stairs which were exactly opposite my door, ascended them again noisily, walked along the corridor, entered Mr. Bloor's room, waited there a moment or two, came out again, and entered the sitting-room of our suite. In ten minutes I was back in my bedroom with the diamonds. In an hour's time, Mr. Bloor's clothes were back in his room and the diamonds safely disposed of.

By NORMAN GREYES.

IT was really, in the first place, not owing to any request from my friend Rimmington that I became interested in the Brighton robbery and murder case. Philip Harris, who was a director of the hotel company, wrote me a personal letter, asking me to represent the interests of the hotel in any way I thought fit, and it was on the strength of this appeal that I travelled down to Brighton and took up my temporary residence at the Magnificent Hotel. Within a few minutes of my arrival, the manager himself waited upon me. As was only natural, he was in a state of great distress. Almost before we had shaken hands, he had commenced to unburden himself.

"Forty different people," he told me, distractedly, "have given notice to leave the hotel within the next few days. Several have gone already, right in the middle of the season."

I probably seemed a little unsympathetic.

"It was another tragedy I came down to investigate, Mr. Grant," I reminded him.

I think that he perceived the justice of my rebuke, for he apologized at once.

"I am sorry, Sir Norman," he said, "but there are times when one can't help being selfish. Mr. Johnson, the chief of the local police, is here waiting to see you. Is there anything I can tell you first? You will visit the suite in which the affair happened, of course?"

"Presently," I answered. "Apart from the obvious evidence, have you any personal impressions you would like to confide?"

Mr. Léon Grant hesitated.

"There is just one small matter, Sir Norman," he said, which worries me a little. Mr. Sidney Bloor is all the time practically under arrest. He has left the hotel and is staying in lodgings on the front, but he is watched night and day."

"There seems to be a moderately clear case against him," I remarked.

"In many respects it would appear convincing," the manager assented. "His antecedents are bad, and his attentions to a woman nearly twenty years his senior are difficult to explain on any other basis except that of self-advantage. He escorted her round to the Royal Hotel to play bridge, cut out during the evening, came back to this hotel, and was seen by the fireman, who acts as night-watchman, to enter Mrs. Trumperton-Smith's suite. The presumption is, of course, that he stole the jewels then, left the hotel with them in his pocket, and passed them on to a confederate. Mrs. Trumperton-Smith and he returned together early in the morning, between one and two, and he escorted her to her suite. His story is that he stayed there for about five minutes and had a whisky-and-soda in the sitting-room, parted with her on friendly terms, and subsequently went to his room, to be awakened at nine o'clock and told by the floor valet that Mrs. Trumperton-Smith had been murdered in the night and her jewellery stolen."

"And what is your comment upon his story?" I inquired.

"Just this," was the earnest reply. "There is no doubt whatever that the young man did return to the hotel alone, but whereas the night-watchman swears that he saw him enter Mrs. Trumperton-Smith's suite at half-past ten, the hall-porter downstairs, two of the pages, and a reception clerk are equally positive that it was exactly midnight when he came in and went upstairs."

"Could he have paid two visits?" I suggested.

"It is exceedingly unlikely, Sir Norman. If he had come in at the time that the night-watchman swore that he saw him go into Mrs. Trumperton-Smith's suite, he must have been noticed downstairs."

"This divergence of evidence," I observed, "is interesting, but I scarcely see what it leads to. Perhaps I had better talk to Mr. Johnson for a little time."

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The Chief Constable himself paid me the honour of a visit, accompanied by Johnson, who was an exceedingly painstaking and capable officer. They had very little fresh information to give me, excepting certain technical details which certainly told against the young man Bloor.

"You say that none of the jewellery has been recovered?" I inquired.

"None of the jewellery in question, I fear," Johnson admitted. "Mr. Bloor has two very handsome pins in his possession, but he was clever enough to admit at once that these were given him by the deceased."

"Is he short of money?"

"Apparently," was the somewhat dry reply.

"You haven't been able to collect any evidence as to his having spoken to anyone outside, on his way back to the Royal?"

"Not at present, I am sorry to say, sir. We are working on that now."

"What about this discrepancy in the alleged time of his visit?"

"That is another of the things we are trying to straighten out. Anyway, the night-watchman, who is a very respectable fellow, is prepared to swear that he saw Sidney Bloor re-enter the suite, even though his idea of the time seems to be out. Assuming that the theft took place then, though, the motive for the murder becomes obscure."

"And Mr. Bloor's own story?"

"He came a terrible cropper, sir," Johnson declared, a little triumphantly. "He at first stated that he only left the bridge table, when he cut out, to get some fresh air—that he leaned over the wall of the promenade, looking at the sea, the whole of the time. Afterwards he admitted that he had visited the hotel and gone up for a moment to Mrs. Trumperton-Smith's suite, where he thought he had dropped his cigar-case."

"Did he mention any time?" I asked.

"He thought it was about midnight."

"The inquest," I remarked, "has been adjourned."

"Till Thursday week, Sir Norman," the Chief Constable told me. "The evidence given at the inquest is at your disposal at any time."

"I have already studied it, thanks," I said. "I should like, if possible, to have a few words with the night-porter and with the deceased's maid."



I went back to my room and donned a complete suit of Mr. Bloor's evening clothes.

The former, whose name was John O'Hara, proved to be a very respectable, stolid, and obstinate man. Nothing could shake his conviction that he had seen Sidney Bloor enter Mrs. Trumperton-Smith's suite at

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about half-past ten and emerge from it five minutes later. He admitted that the corridor was badly lit, but he would not hear a word against his watch. I dismissed him with the conviction that, so far as he knew it, he was speaking the truth. Then I sent for the maid. There was a brief delay, followed by the sound of soft footsteps outside and the opening and shutting of a door. I glanced up from the copy of O'Hara's evidence which I had been studying, and I received, I think, the greatest shock of my life. With her back pressed to the closed door, her fingers clinging to the handle, stood the woman whom I had known as Janet Stanfield !

NEITHER of us spoke for several moments. Her lips were parted, but if she gave vent to any exclamation it was inaudible. Her eyes were fixed upon my face in a stare of amazement. I could see the rapid rise and fall of her bosom. It was obvious that no one had mentioned my name—that she had come to me as a stranger—that her surprise at this meeting was as great as mine. I rose to my feet, and then, at the moment of attempted speech, a new horror seemed to flow in upon my senses. She had been the maid of the murdered woman ! It was, in any case, an ominous coincidence !

Janet came slowly over towards me.

" I did not know that you were here," she said.

" Nor I that you had re-entered domestic service," I replied.

She flinched a little, but she answered me quite quietly.

" Poverty is a hard mistress. When you met me in Bond Street some months ago, and I lunched with you, I was engaged at a dressmaker's establishment. Then my husband sent for me to go to Paris. You know very well what happened to us there. I returned to London worse off than when I had left it. I lost my situation. Then I became a manicurist. I stood that for about three weeks. I had nine shillings in my purse when I saw Mrs. Trumperton-Smith's advertisement. I answered it and came here."

' You are better off now ? " I ventured.

She was beginning to recover her self-possession.

" Hadn't you better warn me that anything I say may be used as evidence against me ? " she asked, mockingly.

" I agree. Yet I shall ask you one question, and one only."

" I do not promise to answer it."

" But you will answer it," I insisted, watching her steadily, " and you will tell me the truth. Had you anything to do with Mrs. Trumperton-Smith's death ? "

" I had not," she replied, unfalteringly.

I sat down with some abruptness. Psychologically it was impossible for me to explain the feeling of relief which seemed to be lightening my whole being.

" You were not even an accomplice ? "

" One question you promised to ask, and one I have answered," she said. " I have finished."

I was thoughtful for a moment. I was thinking of the doctor's evidence at the inquest. The coroner had asked him whether the injuries on the throat of the deceased could have been inflicted by a woman. The reply was there on the depositions before me—" I should think it very unlikely."

" Very well," I said, " I will waive my second question. Instead I will make an appeal to you. I am here to try and discover the person who robbed and murdered your late mistress. Can you help me ? "

" If I could, why should I ? " she demanded. ' We are in opposite camps."

' There will certainly be a reward for the recovery of the jewels."

" I should very much like to earn it," she admitted. " I do not know who stole them."

Have you any idea," I asked her, " why Mrs. Trumperton-Smith left the hotel for her bridge-party that night without any jewellery at all ? "

She considered for a moment.

' Mr. Bloor suggested that she should take off her diamonds and leave them at home," she answered.

" And did she ? "

" Yes ! "

' You know that Mr. Bloor came back to the suite ? "

I have been told so."

' And you know that the evidence is very conflicting as to what time he paid his visit ? "

Yes, I know that. Why shouldn't he have paid two ? "

It is an idea," I admitted. " Do you think that Sidney Bloor is the man we want ? "

" Why should you imagine that I would help you if I could ? " she asked, coldly.

" From the little I have heard of Mr. Sidney Bloor, I should have looked upon him as a nincompoop," I continued.

" I should not have thought," she agreed, " that he would have had courage enough to wring the neck of a chicken."

I regarded her fixedly.

" Why don't you try to earn the reward ? " I asked.

" I am thinking about it," she replied. " If I have any luck, I'll come to you."

She left me then and I went for a stroll along the front. Seated in one of the

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shelters, a little way towards Hove, saw a young man whom I felt sure, from his description, was Sidney Bloor. I looked around and found that one of Rimmington's men was seated on the other side of the shelter. I touched the young man on the arm, and his violent start assured me that I had not made a mistake.

"I believe that you are Mr. Sidney Bloor," I said. "Can I have a few words with you?"

"If you're a journalist——" he began, surlily.

"I can assure you that I am not," I replied. "My name is Norman Greyes. I was once a detective, but at present I do not hold any official position. It is more likely to be to your advantage, than not, to spare me a few minutes."

He rose doubtfully to his feet.

"We can't talk here," he objected.

"Let us take a stroll along the beach," I suggested. "We shall be sufficiently alone there."

We walked side by side over the pebbles to the edge of the sea, and turned towards Hove. My companion was obviously in a state of nerves. He walked unsteadily. He was out of breath before we had gone fifty yards.



Neither of us spoke for several moments. Her eyes were fixed upon my face in a stare of amazement.

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"I have no official connection with this case, Mr. Bloor," I began, "but the hotel company have asked me to make a few inquiries. If you are guilty, the police will probably bring the crime home to you. If you are not——"

"I am not!" he interrupted, passionately.

"If you are not," I repeated, "I am here for your assistance. Remember I am here to discover the truth, not to try and fix the guilt on any particular person. Why don't you tell me the truth?"

He was silent for several moments—probably, I decided, piecing together the story he had made up his mind to tell. He went farther, however, than I had expected.

"I have never laid violent hands upon a woman in my life," he declared. "I never would. All the same, I did mean to rob her. I meant to steal her diamonds."

"Why didn't you?"

"They were stolen before I could get at them. I made her take them off before we went out to bridge. They were left in a drawer, not even locked up. The first time I cut out of the rubber, I came back to the hotel. I went up to her room and searched the drawer where the jewels had been put. They had gone. I concluded that someone had either been before me, or that Mrs. Trumperton-Smith's maid had put them in a safer place. I went back to the bridge-party, came home with Mrs. Trumperton-Smith about two o'clock, said good-night to her in her sitting-room, had a whisky-and-soda, and went to bed. That's all I know about it, so help me God!"

We turned round and retraced our steps.

"When you couldn't find the diamonds, why didn't you take the jewel-case?" I asked.

"I should have been seen carrying it," he replied, "and I had no tools with which to open it. I am not a professional thief. That night I almost wished I had been."

"You are aware that the evidence looks rather black against you?" I pointed out.

"I can't help it," he answered, sullenly. "I didn't do it."

"Have you any theory as to who did?"

"The maid, I should think," he replied. "She was much too superior for her job—a secretive, unsociable sort of person. She wasn't there for nothing."

We reached the steps leading to the promenade.

"I am sorry that you made that last suggestion," I said. "Otherwise, you have done yourself no harm by your frankness. Your story may possibly be true. If it is, you have nothing to worry about."

I left him on the promenade, and saw him stroll across the road to a chemist's shop for a pick-me-up. I went back to the hotel, and discovered that my friend Inspector Rimmington from Scotland Yard had already arrived and had taken over formal conduct of the case. He had already had some conversation with the manager, and had interviewed Janet and the night-watchman. He was now waiting for Sidney Bloor, whose very unenviable *dossier* he had brought down with him. I glanced it through without any particular interest. Rimmington watched me curiously.

"The young man is a thoroughly bad lot," he observed.

I nodded.

"There's only one thing in his favour. When you talk to him you will realize that he is absolutely a decadent, a young man without nerve or any manlike quality. Now I don't know whether it has ever occurred to you, Rimmington, but I should imagine that it would take a person with great strength of nerve to hold a woman by the throat and watch her die. Somehow, I don't believe Bloor could have done that."

Rimmington was singularly unconvinced.

"I shall know better when I have talked to him, perhaps," he remarked.

"Don't encourage these local fellows to make an arrest until to-morrow," I advised.

I TOOK the midday train to town, and travelled in the Pullman with Mr. Léon Grant, the manager of the hotel, who was on his way up to confer once more with the directors. It was obvious that he had taken the tragedy very much to heart. He showed me a cable from Mrs. Trumperton-Smith's son, who was on his way back from Egypt. It ran as follows:—

> *Greatly shocked. Arrive 17th. Hope police will discover criminal. Believe jewels principal part mother's estate. Offer reward immediately for return anyone not connected crime.*

"I am suggesting a tenth part of the insured value," he announced. "I shall see the solicitors before I return."

As we drew into Victoria I offered my companion a lift. He refused, however, on the ground that he had a case of wine in the van, which he was taking back to a wine merchant. I made a few calls, dined at my club, and travelled back again to Brighton by the late train. I met Rimmington in the hall of the hotel and we strolled into the manager's office. Mr. Léon Grant, looking more tired than ever after his long day in town, was speaking passionately down the telephone.

"It is absurd," he declared, as we came in. "I spoke from the number I am asking for

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several times this afternoon. The telephone is in perfect order."

"If you are speaking of Mayfair 1532, Mr. Grant," I intervened, "I am afraid the supervisor is correct. The number is disconnected."

His face, as he looked at us, grew horrible. The receiver slipped from his fingers and fell to the ground, dragging the instrument after it.

"What do you mean?" he gasped.

"Simply that Scotland Yard disconnected your flat in town, for fear you should ring up and find out that the case of wine you brought up to London has been opened," I explained. "Rimmington, this is your job."

Rimmington was quick, but not quick enough. Grant's right hand was in the drawer by his side in a moment, and the silver-plated little revolver at his temple. I believe that he was a dead man before the Inspector laid hands on him. I held the door whilst Rimmington telephoned for a doctor. He arrived almost at once, and his examination lasted barely a few seconds.

"A clean job," he pronounced. "The man must have died immediately."

RIMMINGTON came to my sitting-room, later on, and helped himself to a whisky-and-soda.

"A little secretive this morning, weren't you, Sir Norman?" he observed.

"We wanted the jewels," I pointed out. "Directly the man told me he had a case of wine in the van, I knew that everything was all right."

"When did you get his *dossier*?"

"By the second post this morning," I replied, "and a pretty bad one it was. He has a flat in town under another name, he owes one bookie alone over two thousand pounds, and his domestic arrangements were, to say the least of it, irregular. He was desperately in need of money."

"Even now the reconstruction isn't absolutely simple," my companion mused. "Léon Grant evidently made his way to Mrs. Trumperton-Smith's rooms after her return, she woke up whilst he was making off with the jewel-box, and he strangled her. But what about the two visits from Bloor, earlier in the evening, and the missing diamonds? I think you said that they were not in the jewel-case which you have recovered?"

"I imagine that the night-watchman must have made a mistake," I told him. "On the other hand, Bloor may have already disposed of the diamonds. Again, they may have been mislaid and will be brought in for the reward."

"What first of all made you think of Grant?" Rimmington asked, a little later, as he was preparing to take his leave.

"A very slight thing," I answered. "The woman was strangled, as you know, although the finger-marks were indistinguishable. There was a scratch upon her throat, and a few drops of blood, evidently caused by the finger-nail of the murderer. Now Sidney Bloor's finger-nails are bitten almost to the quick. The manager's, on the other hand, were really noticeable. They were long and brought to a point. The nail on his right forefinger, however, was broken off short."

"I see," Rimmington replied. "Good night!"

I sat up for some little time, waiting for what I felt sure was inevitable. It was nearly one o'clock when there was a soft knock at the door and, in reply to my invitation, Janet entered. She was still fully dressed, her manner was as composed as ever. She closed the door behind her and came over towards me.

"I have found the diamonds," she announced.

"I congratulate you," I replied.

"I have heard all that has happened," she continued. "There will be no trouble about the reward?"

"None whatever," I assured her.

She laid them upon the table—the necklace, the bracelet, and the ear-rings.

"Where did you find them?" I asked.

"In the small silk bag which Mrs. Trumperton-Smith took with her to the bridge-party," she replied. "She came back to her room for a moment just before starting, and must have taken them without saying anything to anybody."

"A most ingenious supposition," I murmured.

She looked at me for a moment with the strangest light in her eyes. She had no need of speech. I knew perfectly well of what she was reminding me. I opened the door for her.

"Good night, Janet," I said. "I have stood in the way of your fortunes more than once. This time I am able to remind myself that Mrs. Trumperton-Smith is not my client. The reward will certainly be paid."

Next month: "The Winds of Death."

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A TREASURE FROM THE EAST

by

L·J·BEESTON

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WHEN the writer of the strange communication had addressed it to "The Chief of the Police, London, England," he lighted a porcelain pipe of Latakia, and stretching out his limbs in the burning sunshine he commenced to read what he had put down, and which ran as follows :—

The blue Bosphorus seems on fire, and the heavy scent from the terebinth trees drugs my brain like wanton kisses. In this hot noon, reclining on the slopes of Therapia, with the doves cooing in the walled garden behind me, I put down the story of what happened at the house of the English Colonel Anselming, in Oxfordshire, on the night of the 22nd of September, in the year which was before this year.

In one of the great convict prisons of England there is a man of the name of Wilton Fairly, and he has been sent there until his life shall end. This was because, on the night I have mentioned, he killed his enemy, whose name was Richard Meads, by the thrust of a long knife on the heart side of the breast-bone.

Well, I—Canaris Tricoupi—am going to give my tale of what occurred. It will be found not to be without strangeness.

It is about a score moons ago when Colonel Anselming came to ancient Stamboul and stayed, for a while, at the palace of his old friend Medjid Pasha, on the banks of the Golden Horn. That great Illustrious, that three-tailed Pasha, who rode with a train of twelve agas, was then my master. He had been educated in England at the big school there which is called, I think, Eton Board School—though I am not sure of the name. He was there with Colonel Anselming.

While he was staying at the palace the colonel took a fancy to me, and my princely master, who was the soul of generosity, gave me to his friend. That was how I came to go to England, to Colonel Anselming's house in Oxfordshire, as one of his servants.

He was a kind master—yes. *He* did not use a rhinoceros whip when I chanced to displease him. But all the time my soul was with the narrow streets of old Stamboul, and the yellow dogs that lie in heaps in the sun, and the bazaars, and those dens by the Solyman mosque where the over-tired can find opium and lie in a stupor that is both terrible and divine.

On the night of the date I have spoken of Colonel Anselming had a small house-party. Amongst his guests were Wilton Fairly and Richard Meads. The last-named had his wife with him. She was as beautiful as the Marmora Sea, as the sweet waters of Asia. But it was easy to see that her lord had no great love for his beautiful caged bird ; also that she drooped under his treatment. By the holy beard, if such a jewel had been given to my keeping, I should have known how to wear it !

At about two hours before midnight I took coffee into the library. The colonel was showing to his company treasures which he had brought home with him from the bazaars of Constantinople. There were pieces of carpet on the walls which were almost as old as the Koran, and which will endure yet for the same span of time ; he had shawls from Bokhara, Macedonian turquoises on a silver string, a genuine chibouk seven feet long, its mouthpiece of amber like the gold of the sun. And when I entered the room, bearing the coffee which I alone in all the house knew how to make, he showed me to his guests as one of his possessions garnered in the East.

"This is Mr. Canaris Tricoupi," said he

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"A cigar—yes," went on the colonel, "and to be lighted and smoked like any ordinary one; but there is death in its fragrance; and sure and easy transition from Here to There."

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with a smile. "Once a real Bashi-Bazouk of Albania, whose yataghan, I warrant, has whistled the head off more than one of his enemies. See, now, how he rolls his black eyes! Since then in the service of his Highness Medjid Pasha, and now my property. Ah," continued my master with a sudden start, "that reminds me that I have here another very curious gift from the Pasha; something a little sinister, a trifle bizarre, which I have not exhibited to you."

As I was interested as much as the others I did not choose to leave the room, and no one paid any attention to me. The colonel took from a cabinet a little vase of cloisonné enamel, and from this he shook out something which fell into the palm of his left hand.

"There it is," he laughed.

For a moment there was silence; then Fairly answered him, surprised: "Why, it is just a cigar!"

"No more than that—and yet so much more," replied Colonel Anselming.

Those strange words drew everyone's eyes to his face.

"A cigar—yes," went on the colonel, "and to be lighted and smoked like any ordinary one; but there is death in its fragrance; a sure and easy transition from Here to There. This cigar was bestowed upon me by my friend Medjid Pasha by way of a farewell gift! That sounds odd to your ears, but the Pasha seemed to regard it as natural enough. His words stick in my memory. 'My dear friend,' said he, with a slow, grave smile, 'we are to-day in the sunshine; to-morrow we may be in the shadow. You leave me in prosperity and health, but the time may come—Allah knows! —when the wine of life will taste bitter to you, and despair rise with you in the morning, and sorrow sit by your pillow at night. If such an hour should ever strike for you, remember this gift from me. It is the final solace for all miseries, the lasting cure for the keenest pain. You will have but to inhale a few times the scented perfume, and you will know the true meaning of the word Rest.' So spoke the Pasha, with deep solemnity, and I could not decline his gift without giving offence."

"And you have kept it ever since?" said Richard Meads's wife, her cheeks pale.

"As you see," smiled the colonel.

Meads himself growled: "It is a dangerous thing to have about the place. Suppose someone finds it and smokes it?"

"Oh, I take care of it," answered the colonel. "I am rather interested in these mystic drugs, and one day I will have it put through a chemical analysis. It is saturated with some essence that must be terribly potent to destroy life by a simple inhalation. I have no doubt that my friend the Pasha knew what he was talking about, however."

He then put the cigar in the vase and placed both back in the cabinet.

I REMEMBER that that night sleep would not visit me. It was one of those intolerable nights in that island when the heat sucks the strange fogs out of the ground so that one almost strangles for breath. It was my pleasure to seek the terrace which runs along one side of the house, and there to hold conversation with my soul. I was not at my ease. I admit—Allah forgive me!—that the beauty of the woman I have mentioned, and the deep melancholy in her eyes, disturbed my peace; then my heart's thoughts were with my old master, the royal Medjid, despite that rhinoceros whip, and with the green roofs of the kiosks in the gardens of cherry trees, and the pomegranates. Also I thirsted bitterly for a throat-full of raki, which one buys from the venders in the market-place in Stamboul and which goes to the brain like fire.

As I walked along the terrace considering these blessings which I had lost, I saw a light that streamed from the windows of the library, and heard voices coming from that room. This was surprising, for the hour was late. I approached with caution, and when I looked in I saw the two men Richard Meads and Wilton Fairly. The first sat on a table, swinging his legs, his face white as the dead, his eyes filled with hate, and a sneer twisting his lips. He was saying to the other, who stood by the fireplace:—

"If Anselming were not as blind as a bat he would never ask both of us, my dear cousin, to be his guests at the same time. This house, or any house, isn't big enough to hold you and me."

"For that matter the world is too small a place," answered the other man, very quietly.

"Oh, I don't know," said Meads, looking very evil. "I find it very comfortable, Wilton. True, I haven't the money you have got, but then I have a wife who is more than devoted to me."

When he heard that, and the mocking tone of the speaker, Fairly spun round and stared into the embers of the fire. He had been shot with a poisoned dart, and another followed quickly.

"Surely you do not envy me my good fortune?" went on Meads, laughing lightly. "But perhaps you do. Perhaps you desire, more than all things, to find a woman to love you as Marjorie adores me. Or—is it possible——?"

The other wheeled round again, and I saw sparks come from his eyes. "Billah!" he snarled—no, it was the English equivalent.

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"Damnation!" said he, quivering from head to foot.

"That found you?" continued Meads, and his voice had suddenly become savage, threatening. "So much the better. I tell you that I have eyes, and good ones, too! I have seen, and I have heard——"

Fairly burst in like a storm. "Spoken like a scoundrel—the scoundrel that you are!" he shouted. "Oh, you three times fool to breathe, to dream the faintest black thought against that divine creature. Look here, you devil, you, I swear that although I do not own her and you do, yet if you let fall the merest whisper against her——" He stopped, suffocating with wrath.

"Go on; I would like to hear the finish," said Meads, deadly calm.

"I will put an end to your wastrel's life!" concluded the other.

AT that most interesting moment I heard a voice say: "I beg your pardon, gentlemen. I thought you had retired. I saw a light in the room and came to see——"

"All right, Forbes," interrupted Fairly, hastily.

I knew then that the butler of the house had disturbed them.

There was a silence of a few moments, and then Meads said: "If Forbes heard your pleasant words, my dear cousin, he will wonder, and he may talk."

There was no reply, only another and longer silence. I ventured closer and peered through the glass. I saw Meads in the act of lighting a cigar; but he paused, holding the match, and called out mockingly:—

"Here is a pretty idea that occurs to me: suppose I yield a little credit to that story of Anselming's about the drugged weed in that cabinet yonder. Suppose I smoke it and test its ability to put one to sleep. If I do not wake up—so much the better for you; but if I do—then you pay all my debts, which are neither small nor few, and sign a nice cheque into the bargain?"

"I would agree to that, with all my heart, if I did not know you to be too great a poltroon," was the immediate response.

"You are ready with your compliments," replied Meads in the voice of one who hates and remembers. "But I have a mind to take you at your word. Now, what might the cheque to me be—after the debts had been wiped off?"

"Name your own figure," scoffed the other, in the tone of a sceptic.

"It would run into thousands, my dear cousin."

"How many?"

"Five!"

"Agreed," said Fairly, instantly, in the same tone of disbelief.

Meads jumped off the table and went to the cabinet. I was thrilled to the tips of my fingers. He came back with the cigar in the palm of his left hand. He said: "I am not entirely a fool. If I thought a few puffs at this thing meant death I should not oblige you by enjoying them. But I have never heard of anyone being poisoned in such a way. On the other hand, you would not expect me to consume this thing to the very end?"

"Five minutes will do," replied Fairly. The mocking had died from his voice; he began to think that the other meant what he said.

"You will time me by your watch?" questioned Meads.

"For five minutes—yes."

Meads turned the cigar over and over. His face had reddened a little, and I could see that he was getting excited. He said: "Do you know how much money I owe?"

"No; nor do I care. That will be my affair."

"Then I have only your word for the five thousand?"

"You have my word."

"I will do you the justice to admit that I never questioned it," said Meads. He stood for a time looking at the cigar in his palm.

"Just five minutes, mind," said he, the red in his cheeks deepening.

"Not a second longer."

"If Anselming was right, if it sends me to sleep for good, it will be thought I came down here and deliberately removed myself from this happy world; is it not so?"

"That will be the inevitable conclusion."

"You are a cold-blooded swine," snarled the other, uncertain.

"The idea is your own. Back out if you wish."

"No, I will not. I don't care a curse," said Meads. "Here goes!"

I pressed my face against the glass to see what was happening. The man Meads dropped into a chair, put both his feet up on the edge of a table, and applied a light to the cigar. I saw the smoke ascend, I saw the coiled tobacco leaf glow. He tossed aside the light, sank back in the chair, and drew steadily on the cigar between his teeth.

His back was towards Fairly, who had not moved from the fireplace, and did not move. He stood there, with a gold watch in the palm of his hand. He was terribly cool. His eyes kept travelling from the dial to the man in the chair, to the little cloud of smoke which hung over the man's head. Neither of them spoke a single word.

Yes, to the very ends of my fingers was I thrilled. I was amazed that the cold blood

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of these pale Englishmen could ever boil with a passion like that. The tip of my nose achèd as it pressed upon the cold pane. I missed not a moment of the scene nor of what followed.

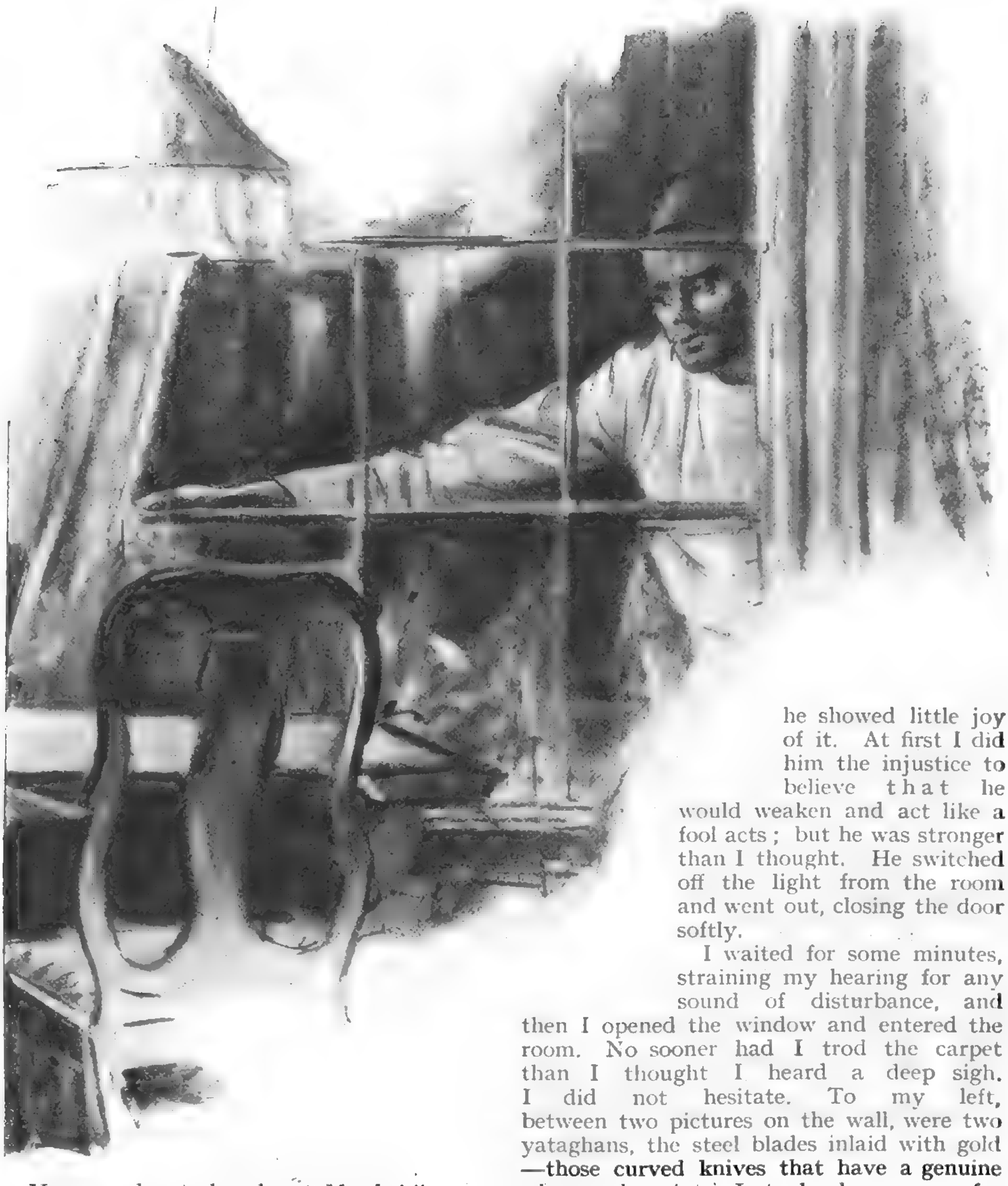
For suddenly I saw the smoker's right hand fall limply over the side of his chair, and from the relaxed fingers dropped the glowing cigar. His head sank back upon the cushion behind it, and the quietude and stillness of death wrapped him round.

When he saw that something had happened, the man Fairly stepped forward. He was cool as ice, for his first act was to pick up the cigar, which was burning the carpet, and to place it on a metal tray on the table. Then he leaned over the still form in the chair.



He took up a small electric lamp and held the white light to the face of his enemy. "My God, he is gone!" I heard him say.

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He rapped out sharply: "Meads!"

He was not answered. He took up a small electric lamp and held the white light to the face of his enemy. His own grew pale and haggard as he looked, although it lost nothing of its sternness. He put the lamp down, pressed a hand to the other's forehead, felt his wrist.

"My God, he is gone, sure enough!" I heard him say, huskily.

He stood for a while as if dazed. He had triumphed over his foe, but I must say that he showed little joy of it. At first I did him the injustice to believe that he would weaken and act like a fool acts; but he was stronger than I thought. He switched off the light from the room and went out, closing the door softly.

I waited for some minutes, straining my hearing for any sound of disturbance, and then I opened the window and entered the room. No sooner had I trod the carpet than I thought I heard a deep sigh. I did not hesitate. To my left, between two pictures on the wall, were two yataghans, the steel blades inlaid with gold —those curved knives that have a genuine edge and point. I took down one, for precaution's sake, and approached the chair where the man was sitting in his stillness. I did not make the least noise in the dark, and when the man awoke—for it pleased Allah to wake him—instinct must have told him of my near presence, for he uttered a slight cry and caught hold of my arm.

"Hush," I whispered, soothingly. "Oh, hush! It is better to die than to sleep."

And I slid the knife where it was found, in the heart side of the breast-bone.

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A Treasure From the East

I HAVE nodded in the fierce heat, and left my story unfinished. The cooing of the turtle-doves and the hum of the half-stupefied bees lulled my senses. How beautiful it is here, with the scent from the orange groves mingling with the perfume from the terebinth trees and the Bosphorus, as I said, like a sheet of fire. Behind the wall of the garden at my back a girl is singing to the music of a three-stringed guitar. I wonder what she is like. With such a voice she must be lovely. When I have made an end of this story I will venture to peep. Wallah! Canaris Tricoupi is not yet old, nor is he ugly! There are lips that open for him like lotus flowers in the sun, and white breasts that are softer than cushions.

Why did I kill Richard Meads? It was not because he was a scoundrel. Ah, who is otherwise? I killed him because he chose to awake at the wrong moment. But if he awoke, then he was not dead? That is clear truth. He had only swooned. The excitement of the moment, and the dread thought that he was breathing fatal fumes, had touched him with faintness, had sunk him in a momentary unconsciousness. As for the cigar—it was harmless.

Unluckily for him, he chose to awake at the instant when my hand was stretched out to take the cigar from the tray beside him. I did not want to be interrupted at such a moment, which was to me supreme.

For I had heard of those cigars which my late master, Medjid Pasha, was used to give to his particular friends. He was wont to laugh behind his beard at the construction which those friends put upon his words. What was it he said? "When the wine of life shall taste bitter; when despair shall rise with you in the morning, and sorrow sit by your pillow at night." But that noble illustrious Medjid Pasha had his own ideas for such cases. He did not believe that death was the cure for such ills. Ah, no; he believed that Money relieved them all. Therefore he played his ruse; therefore in each cigar he had placed a jewel of exceeding price! That was his "final solace for all miseries, the lasting cure for the keenest pain." Riches! And I believe him. What is there better than gold on the face of the earth?

For see! The sufferer from human ill would light the cigar, and presently there would drop from it a lustrous jewel worth a fortune. Was not that the true meaning of the promised word Rest? By my father's beard, I know of no sweeter jest to play upon a friend.

Yes, I, Canaris Tricoupi, helped myself to the jewel which I found in the cigar. Luckily for me, I discovered it in the end which had not been lighted, for it may well be true that the action of fire upon the gem might have cracked its beauty and marred its value; which goes to show that even a royal Pasha like my late master may overlook an important detail in his desire to be original.

It was some time after I left the service of the English colonel, and returned to my own country, that I heard that Wilton Fairly had been sentenced to a lifelong imprisonment for the killing of his enemy. They had found much evidence against him, with which I have nothing to do. He could not have pleaded the story of the cigar, for it was certain that Meads had not died that way. Then the sworn word of the butler, who told what he had heard that night, turned the scale of his destiny.

I am now rich. The jewel was of rare quality, and I sold it to Hafiz the Bald, who openly sells Kurdish fowls in the market-place, but in secret makes much money by ways black as night; for which Allah deal with him. Besides, he beat me down many sequins.

I have written the true story of what happened, but I am not sure that I shall send it. The man Fairly was kind to me, and the woman he loved may give herself to me in Paradise if I make her happy now. That is very possible. I am not without a soft spot in my heart, and if a word from me—— ; but I am not certain that I shall speak it, and I may tear this paper into a thousand fragments. Yet being rich as I am—wealthy as the dog of a Teriaki in his opium dreams—why should I fear any police? I am now able to take good care of myself, and so I think I will send this letter—perhaps.

HOW blissful is this spot! The caress of the fierce sun is the desire of my soul fulfilled. A boat is floating by with its fruit for the market, and the Armenian swine its master is cursing the rowers. Poor devils, they toil like slaves. If I was there I would slit his windpipe. In the distance I see the Sultan's barge, with its twenty-six oars flashing. And still the doves coo like a maiden in her lover's arms, as she swoons under his ravishing kisses. And a fountain splashes, and that girl in the garden behind me sings to her three-stringed guitar. Allah be thanked, this is happiness!

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Photo. Hoppé.

LADY LAVERY'S VIEWS *on* ART —*and Other Things*

IN AN INTERVIEW.

IN spite of all the talk about sex equality, I do not believe that woman can ever be man's equal in creative art. She lacks the ability to be entirely original, while possessing an imitative skill that may actually be greater than that of man.

Notwithstanding the protests of feminists, man must take first place in Nature. Woman comes second; she is the weaker vessel. This was what the Creator intended, and those who try to fly in the face of Nature must not complain if they have a bad fall.

Man has petted and spoiled woman through the ages, treated her like a plaything. When woman wanted anything, she has had to cajole man into giving it to her. Not being strong enough to take what she wanted, she has had to gain her end by indirect means.

Countless centuries of this domestic diplomacy have endowed woman with a strange intuition, have bred in her a subtlety which can generally overcome the sheer strength of the male.

There have been brilliant women painters whom many admire. Rosa Bonheur, for instance, whose "Horse Fair" in the National Gallery exhibits such strength, was admittedly an exceptional woman, but the picture is not of high artistic merit. She dressed in male garments, bobbed her hair long before the present fashion was thought of, and generally behaved as though she were a man. She tried, as far as Nature would allow, to cast aside the weaknesses of her sex. Yet when we compare her pictures with those of the great Masters such as Michel Angelo, Rembrandt, or Turner, we realize that in great art woman has up to the present taken second place.

Christina Rossetti wrote some beautiful sonnets, Mrs. Browning penned wonderful poems, but if we turn from their work to that of Shakespeare or Dante, we realize that the greatest of women poets are not comparable with the men.

When my husband suggested that I should exhibit some of my pictures with his, it was a long time before I considered I was sufficiently accomplished to do so. It is a genuine ordeal for an amateur to face the critics for the first time. I must confess the idea disturbed me, but after all is said and done, when a woman enters the public arena she must expect to be treated accordingly. This is one of the disadvantages of competing with man.

Criticism is a healthy and essential spur to the artist, but, unfortunately, criticism in the best sense is rare indeed in England to-day. The fine literary style of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has vanished,

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and all too often an artist suffers at the hands of inexperienced journalists who seek only something sensational.

There are, however, a few critics who understand that true criticism involves a certain measure of appreciation and understanding. My greatest pride and happiness was when that most distinguished critic, Sir Claude Phillips, wrote with respect to my work :—

> The paintings and drawings of Lady Lavery are very far from being commonplace. Her technical accomplishment is limited, there is something tentative about her work altogether; and yet she has in some mysterious way made herself a mistress of subtle characterization. We note in some of her portraits a concentrated expression of personality, a laying bare of intimate idiosyncrasies such as is generally the result of penetrating vision served by masterly execution. There can be no question of high technical accomplishment in the half-length "The Countess of Rocksavage"; and yet we are able not only to admire the soft, Oriental languor of the sitter, but to divine beneath it a true spirituality. The "Mrs. Ralph Peto" is a portrait somewhat roughly painted, but yet with a total absence of staginess rising to real dramatic intensity. Most remarkable of all is "H.R.H. the Duke of Spoleto," a counterfeit presentment of youthful manhood *sournois*, disquieting, mysterious as some portrait of the Cinquecento. Quite flat and commonplace, on the other hand, though it is what might be called a good likeness, is the "Sir John Lavery, R.A." A nervous vivacity characterizes the small, half-length "Adèle, Countess of Essex." In a full-length drawing appears, sympathetically characterized, the beautiful ballerina Anna Pavlova. Some of these drawings are, to be quite frank, hesitating and amateurish in character. We pick out the best, and name the realistic "Cardinal Logue," the sentimental "Convalescence," the delicately modelled "Nude Study," and a "Pencil Drawing," which is the close and successful adaptation of a draped Tanagra figure.



Convalescence.
A portrait of herself by Lady Lavery.

Sir Claude's attitude of serious criticism is a great contrast to that of other of the critics who dismissed the exhibition because, as they said, a Cabinet Minister had written an appreciation of it in the catalogue. Surely this is a prejudiced and narrow point of view, manifestly unjust to the artist who, having done his best, deserves an opinion on his work, whether good or bad.

There is a particularly hateful form of artistic and intellectual snobbery which decries the Bright and Beautiful as being frivolous. Those who have this viewpoint do not consider that Art and Riches can possibly go hand in hand. Art should be strenuous, serious, dismal—and, in fact, it can be all three, but then the results given to the world need not of necessity show the agony and struggle through which the artist produces the picture.

My husband has been accused of painting places only frequented by the rich and great of the land. One critic complains that he depicts only "Belgravia by the Sea" and "Mayfair in the Mountains"—but are the sea and mountains less beautiful because of this?

Another critic objects to my portraits being of Ladies of "Social Position"—a horrible phrase beloved of this particular sort of snob, to whom distinction and elegance are merely fashionable affectations, and dignified splendour becomes vulgar display and ostentation. Such people feel that Art should be cloaked in poverty and starve in its garret. They do not remember, or perhaps they do not know, that some of the world's greatest pictures have been painted in palaces. Beauty is beauty wherever the artist finds it. It may be found, of course, in the misshapen, ugly, bizarre, and grotesque, but inversely it may also exist even in the work of a 'fashionable painter." Velazquez, Titian, Vandyke, Reynolds, Gainsborough, were all "fashionable painters"; they were also none the less great artists.

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Sir John and Lady Lavery at the recent joint exhibition of their work.

Photo. The Farringdon Photo Co.

I used to think it was all nonsense about a prophet being without honour in his own country. Now I am beginning to revise my opinion.

A friend who knew of my intention to exhibit my pictures happened to mention the news to an acquaintance.

"Lady Lavery—to exhibit? . . but she can't paint!" came the reply.

"Oh, yes. She is holding an exhibition of pictures with her husband," said my friend.

"But it can't be true," said the acquaintance, incredulously. "Why, I took tea with her yesterday."

I have not been in the habit of talking about my work except to my most intimate friends, and I suppose the fact that I did not talk Art with her was sufficient proof that I was unable to work.

This is the common failing. If we hear that a certain young man has written a book of brilliant poems, someone is bound to remark: "What, Mr. Exe, a poet? . . . Impossible! Why, I was at school with him!" The last remark is considered final, but it really shows how little we know of each other.

I have never studied in a school of art, but I have the advantage of being the wife of a painter, and it is only natural that I should take an interest in the profound mysteries of colour and form, and the mixing of paint. Discussions of such things are always going on around me, and one could not help learning something about painting in time.

Art is a great pleasure and a great solace, as is all serious work. Mr. Churchill found it so when he withdrew from political life. The world was not particularly bright for anyone just then. To one of Mr. Churchill's temperament, to be deprived of an outlet for his energies was like being in prison. Time for him passed slowly, and he often used to come and watch Sir John at work in his studio.

"Do you think I could ever learn to do that?" he asked one day, as he saw a picture growing under the skilful strokes of the brush.

"Certainly—if you study and devote your time to it," Sir John replied.

Thereafter Mr. Churchill came down to the studio, and hovered round Sir John like an inquisitive boy. Always he was asking questions.

"Why do you do that?" he would say.

Sir John would tell him.

"Why mix those?" he would ask, watching my husband mixing colours.

Sir John would explain.

Winston Churchill learned incredibly quickly. He seemed to absorb Art through

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every pore. He threw himself heart and soul into the work and found much solace and happiness in it.

Once when I wandered into the studio and found him at work, he rose and stepped back from his canvas, then looked across to where Sir John was painting. "I've a lot to learn," he said, humbly.

Now, during the week-ends he and Sir John often go out into the country and sketch all day. He is quite happy when painting. He will make his sketch and go home to his studio to finish the picture, relying solely upon his stored-up impressions to enable him to achieve the result he aims at. He has a fine colour sense and a keen eye for varying tone values.

If Mr. Churchill ever holds an exhibition of his paintings, the quality of his work will agreeably surprise his many friends. At the same time, I can imagine his opponents saying: "A pity he doesn't give up politics and take seriously to painting. He's a much better painter than politician!"

On the other hand, I suppose his supporters will remark: "Why does he waste time painting when he is such a brilliant politician?" It is difficult to please everyone in this world.

I find it hard to understand why he should be regarded with such animus by some of his opponents. Like all strong characters, he has many enemies, but he is a very human man, kind of heart, striving to do his best for his country.

To his intimates, he is lovable, keen to appreciate a joke, even though it be against himself. I have seen him laugh heartily at a cartoon of himself with a ridiculous little hat perched on the top of his head: his strongest political opponent could not have been more amused.



Photo. Graphic Photo Union.

This photograph of Mr. Winston Churchill at work will interest all who read his recent articles in this magazine on "Painting as a Pastime."

I remember at dinner one night the conversation turned from critics to criticism and the power of the Press. A well-known editor, who happened to be present, listened quietly for a little while. Then his eyes twinkled. "I have heard it said that the world would be a better place if all pressmen were put in a lethal chamber," he remarked.

"That's much too humane," came the swift retort from one of the guests who, apparently, was not enamoured of Fleet Street.

It reminds me of the witty retort of Whistler when his work was being attacked so unmercifully by the critics. Some particularly hard remarks by Ruskin stung Whistler into saying that the critics did not know what they were talking about.

Ruskin, in his ponderous way, replied that he had spent his life in the finest public galleries in the world, looking at pictures, and if that did not entitle him to speak with authority on Art, he would like to know what did.

"If that's your test," retorted Whistler, "the policeman on duty at the National Gallery must be the finest Art critic alive!"

A few months ago I received a letter from a foreigner who wrote asking me if I would accept his fees of two hundred pounds for an Art course. He said he was sure I would help him, as I had a kind face!

Another lady wrote and mentioned that her daughters, who were about my figure, were shortly to be launched into local society. She was sure I had *hundreds* of frocks that I never wore, and she would be glad if I could give one or two to her daughters!

There was a good deal of comment during our recent exhibition about Sir John showing landscapes "for the first time," instead of portraits.

Sir John himself was rather amused at it, and not without reason, for his first picture accepted by the Academy was a landscape, and his work is generally represented in

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foreign galleries by landscapes, and not by portraits!

The artist gets very close to Nature in painting landscapes, but he gets closer to humanity in painting portraits. The sitter often reveals himself unconsciously to the artist by some chance remark or gesture.

One of the most interesting experiences Sir John ever had was when he was privi-

Sir John was the one onlooker. He was the solitary audience, the one man at liberty to look on and see what took place, and to record it on canvas for all time. His two sketches in oils are the only two pictorial records of the arrival of the Germans on the quarter-deck of the British flagship and the scene that took place in the cabin. No



THE SURRENDER OF THE GERMAN NAVY:

The scene in the fore-cabin of H.M.S. "Queen Elizabeth," November 16th, 1918.

From the Painting by Sir John Lavery.

By permission of Raphael Tuck & Sons, Ltd.

leged to be in Admiral Beatty's flagship, the *Queen Elizabeth*, to watch the Germans sign the surrender of the German Fleet. Many a man would have given a fortune to be an eye-witness of that historic scene.

Sir John was the one civilian present, and he is the only man alive who saw everything that took place. Every officer present, from Admiral Beatty downward, had his appointed task to perform, and they were so intent on what they were doing that they could not take in everything that transpired. They were like the actors in a play, so busy with their parts that they had no time to stop and watch.

cameras were allowed, and no photographs were taken.

The day before the Germans arrived, Sir John prepared his canvas by painting the interior of the cabin and arranging the chairs. The next day, from his vantage point on the quarter-deck, he spent an hour sketching the scene, leaving only the figures of the Germans to be put in later.

The Germans were due to arrive at three o'clock in the afternoon, whereas, owing to the fog and the bad condition of the engines of their flagship, they did not put in an appearance until nearly seven in the evening. The consequence was that Sir John's preliminary work on the canvas showing their

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Lady Lavery as a Venetian lady.



As Our Lady of Pity.

Photos. Hoppé.

As a Florentine lady.

arrival aboard the British flagship was quite wasted. The conditions of light and atmosphere had entirely changed.

When the Germans arrived on board, Sir John, working very rapidly, visualized the whole scene and managed to put it on canvas in about twenty minutes. This is the untouched sketch that was shown in the Academy. While painting it he stood right in the dark. A strong headlight was concentrated on the Germans, and an electric light was attached to his canvas in such a way that the light did not show except on the picture.

By the time he had finished this sketch and walked below, all the Germans were seated. Sir John took up his position in the corner of the cabin, where his paints and canvas were effectually screened by a bank of flowers on a table. Everyone present was very grave. There was no gleam of triumph to be seen in the eyes of the British naval officers. All seemed to feel the responsibility of their position, and an air of sadness touched the faces of victors as well as vanquished.

Sir John stood and studied the scene before him. The British were on his left. The Germans were on the right with their backs slightly turned, so that their faces were more or less in profile. Sir John chose this position because the Germans did not know he was painting them, and from first to last they had no idea they were being portrayed for posterity in the most moving drama that has ever taken place on the sea.

That evening, during the preliminary negotiations, Sir John did not touch the cabin scene. He spent his time studying what lay before him. The next morning he took up his position before the Germans arrived, and worked as long as the daylight, helped by electric light, lasted, which was about four hours.

To an artist, talk is very distracting, and the better the word-picture he is able to formulate, the worse he paints. An artist

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should be all eyes and no ears, but the human interest of the drama that took place in the cabin of the *Queen Elizabeth* was so great that several times Sir John found there was a battle going on between his eyes and ears. He found his hand lagging as he stopped to listen, and it required an effort of will to set his brush to work again.

Nevertheless, he managed to concentrate on his work to such an extent that he actually heard very little of what was said. His ears caught a word here and there, and it was when these words thrust themselves on his consciousness that the battle between eyes and ears went on.

It was considered impossible for a civilian to be present on that occasion, so Sir John had to disguise himself in naval uniform. As he does not possess such a thing in his wardrobe, he was obliged to borrow a uniform belonging to Commodore Brand, who received the Germans on the quarter-deck of the British flagship.

Later on, when Admiral Beatty came to sit for his portrait in the big finished picture of the surrender, which was based on the sketch, I asked him how my husband looked in his borrowed plumes.

The Admiral smiled. "Very noble," he said. "Very noble indeed. But the uniform was just a trifle large!"

I fancy Sir John was unjustifiably proud of the effect he created in that uniform. There may be some excuse for the vanity of the female, but there can be none for that of the male. I tell him so, but he merely laughs.

An artist well known in the North was engaged in painting a family group of the *nouveau riche*. The grandmother in the group was a typical Scot, full of commonsense and a love of the bawbees. She was annoyed with her grandson for wasting such an awfu' lot of money in getting their portraits painted when they could all go to the local photographer and get a picture for a guinea. She did not hide her opinion from the artist.

While the painter was able to make progress with the other portraits in the group, he could do nothing at all with this stern old woman. There she sat, grim and forbidding, with a look on her face that would spoil any picture.

The painter told funny story after funny story to try to induce her to smile, and at last the old lady could stand it no longer.

"Don't you think, sirrrr, that it would be betterrrr if you went on with your worrrrk!" she said, crushingly.

My husband generally tells this story to his sitters as a gentle hint that an artist cannot talk and work at the same time. Of course, the sitters find it rather trying to sit in silence for any length of time, and Sir John has hit on a clever way of interesting them. He arranges a mirror at his back so that the sitters can see exactly how the portrait is going on. They can watch it growing and see the difficulties that the painter has to overcome.

As Sir John jocularly remarks: "It breaks the shock! By the time the portrait is finished the sitter is used to it!"



As a Madonna.

Photo. Hoppé.

I recollect finishing a portrait of which I was very proud. Later, two friends, both acquainted with the sitter, came in.

"You must come and see the picture I've just finished," I said.

They stood for a few moments in front of the picture without saying anything at all.

"Don't you think it good?" said one at last.

"Very!" replied the other. "Very good indeed. Who is it?"

I often wonder if any of us are as bad as we are painted. Certainly the feminists who quarrelled with my remarks will be still further displeased with those of Sir James Barrie.

Sir James and I were chatting animatedly on the subject of women one day, and he completed the discussion by saying: "Before I die I'm going to write a play called 'Women Spoil Everything,' and leave it to be produced after my death."

Some women might regard this as a threat against their sex, but I think the majority of women would willingly allow the author of "Peter Pan" to write what he liked, so long as they were privileged to enjoy the witty and wise things that would surely creep into his play.

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The FRAYING OF THE STRING

by

OLE LUK-OIE

(Author of "The Green Curve," etc.)

ILLUSTRATED BY
W. R. S. STOTT

AS Sandys cantered homewards up the Mall he suddenly remembered that Merrow was coming to stay with him, also the fact that he had, in consequence, certain housekeeping duties to perform; and he pulled up at the fusty little general shop with the name "Thomas Perry and Co." painted on its front. The scowling Pathan doorkeeper not being in evidence to hold his pony, he cocked his right leg in a disrespectful way over the ears of Gooseberry Fool and slid to the ground. Slipping his arm through the reins, he put his head in at the door of the shop and beat the floor with his cane.

He had not to wait long before an old man shuffled out from behind the zareba of assorted merchandise which filled three-quarters of the shop. He was dressed in European clothes of an antiquated cut; but his complexion was too dark for an Englishman, and he had brown eyes, liquid and appealing as those of a scared spaniel.

"Good morning, sar. I am veree pleased to see you." The voice was low, almost tremulous, and the sing-song intonation was not unpleasing.

"Good morning, Pereira. Another large food order." Sandys consulted his note-book. "Let me see. What about two bottles of anchovies in oil—curly sort, six tins of sardines, one bottle of prunes, and a bottle of gin to souse 'em in? No, make it Kümmel—Crême d'Alasch, and not the other. Got a guest coming to-morrow; want to do him proud. Hence these luxuries."

"Veree good, sar. I send at once."

"'Arf a mo'. Cock down two tins strawberry jam, a couple of tins of the usual biscuits, and if the mail is in, and you've got your fresh lot, I'll have a box of the old Necropoulos. That's the demnition total."

"Yes; cigarettes just in this morning."

"Good. I'll take them with me. Now I want your advice. My friend, Merrow, is coming up to spend some leave with me. He is going to work for his Lower Standard, and wants a munshi. What about old Ghaneshi Lal, or that new fellow, Ghafur Ali?"

"Ghaneshi Lal the best: old, like me, and slow; but he's sure, and knows what wanted; not teaching your friend too much Persian."

"Right. I'll tell Merrow. By the way, my pal's musical, and I know I shall have to drag out my baja and whack her up. I want two or three high G strings. None of your last season's mildewed, monsoon-begotten relics out of that airtight tin box of yours which ain't airtight, but a couple of the best—all gut and brand new."

"Veree sorree, sar, all banjo strings going bad in monsoon, and fresh consignment not yet arrived."

"Dirty work, dirty work! Merrow's sure to want music to his drink. What can you

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do, old Pereira, eh? No use writing to Calcutta?"

"No. I tell you, Mr. Sandys. I have some of my own violin E strings left, in cheroot-drying bottle, kept separate. They veree good. I will let you have one—one onlee."

"Will it do?"

"Oah yes. They are reallee much too good for inferior instrument like banjo."

"You go to the devil, with your 'inferior instrument'; but cock it down."

"No. I making present to you."

"Rot! Why should you give it to me?"

"Mr. Sandys, these strings are different. They are my veree own private stock for my own violin. I not letting anyone have them except you—my friend. I nevaire selling own strings—even to you. I give one as present." An expression of admiration came into the speaker's eyes, and he looked at the fresh-faced subaltern with such obvious affection that the latter could not but observe it somewhat to his embarrassment.

"Well, if that's how the land lies, thank you very much. I should like one."

"That all right, sar. I not playing much now. I fetch it," replied the merchant, turning round into the recesses of his cave.

"Hold hard. Never mind the string now. Let's have the cigarettes. I'm dying for a smoke."

As the subaltern stood waiting, one foot on the veranda step, he thought very kindly of the old man, between whom and himself there seemed to be an indefinable bond.

MEANWHILE, Gooseberry Fool, the loutish-looking, country-bred pony, who had been standing on three legs with that air of boredom which camels and cab horses can assume better than any other animal in the world, had grown very tired of waiting. His thoughts turned towards his stable and feed. He was distinctly peckish; and master was staying longer than his wonted time at this stupid place, where there was no grain—not even a blade of grass. Casting his lack-lustre eye round, he spied in the dark space under the boarded floor of the veranda, which was raised some six inches above ground-level, something that looked like a grain or two. The reins were loose, and he stretched forward to reach the coveted morsels, his contracting nostrils snuffing in the scent of food and his prehensile lips protruded to reach it. Unluckily, amongst the grain was a little lady spider, happily absorbed in her own domestic duties. When Gooseberry's hairy and active lip butted vulgarly and suddenly into her young life, she clasped her legs over head and body in panic and self-defence, and at once became a lifeless ball; and the pony's next sniff carried her up into his open nostril. Finding herself in this damp and clammy tunnel, she uncoiled and struggled for dear life.

The effect was instantaneous. Panicked in his turn, Gooseberry blew his nose violently, expelling the tickling, unwelcome intruder as a shell from a gun, and jerked back his head, nostrils palpitating. In doing this, he snatched the reins off his master's arm, causing him to throw several cigarettes from the freshly-opened box just handed to him over the floor of the shop. Then, feeling his head free, he bolted, whinnying, up the Mall towards home and dinner.

"Well, I'm damned!" said the startled Sandys. "What's stung Gooseberry? I've never known him do that before. Little fool! I shall have to walk home. I say, Pereira, that's because your beastly doorkeeper isn't here. What's happened to him?"

"Veree sorree, sar. I pick them up," cried the distressed Perry, bending down and collecting the scattered cigarettes. "I send away Yussuf yesterday. He bad man, giving me gali. He's pukka badmash. I not got new man yet. Please."

"I never liked the scowling swab. But what's he been doing?"

"Many times I tell him not play the surnai—his what you call a bagpipes. Yesterday, in my house, I was composing new nocturne in F when he began to make beastlee hubbub. I got angree. I call him soor ka bachcha, and he say bad words to me. Then I give him sack. Ah, he veree bad man, worst jungle wallah. I stand much from him—he always lazy. But when he spoil my music so much, I say 'Hat jao.' You know, sar, what music is to me."

Sandys lit a cigarette and nodded.

"To-day I hope to get new servant. Here, sar. Your string. Take care of it; I cannot give you another." And he handed over the little coil in its silver paper wrapping.

"I believe your old strings are part of you, Pereira—heartstrings, in fact."

"You making fun, Mr. Sandys; but what you say is true. There is more than you think in music. Violin is part of me; and, sometimes when I break a string, I feel almost something snapping in me here." He placed his hand over his heart. "You will laugh, but I think when I die, all violin strings breaking, perhaps violin also. God knows! You understand, sar?"

"Yes, yes. I think I know how you feel. Your violin is everything to you—all you've got now."

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'Yes, yes. Don't forget what I say. I knowing when that string breaks. I tell you."

"Well, I suppose I must foot it back. Good-bye, Pereira."

"Good morning, sar."

Sandys walked off with his box of cigarettes under his arm, swinging his cane slowly as he pondered. What a curious, pathetic figure the solitary old man presented! Neither white nor black, he was a derelict of Portuguese rule, and his European descent, to which he clung, not accepted by the sahibs to whom he aspired to belong, and he himself looking down upon the race from which he derived his strain of colour. He was doomed to be for ever aloof, separate. Having long ago lost his wife and only son, he had nothing left in life save his business, in which he took a merely perfunctory interest, and music, for which he had an absorbing passion. He was also a mystic. Sandys shared the old man's love of music, and was in sympathy with him, but he did not understand his strain of mysticism, which he would have described to his brother-subalterns as 'old Perry's rot." Nevertheless, he could not but realize that there was some special bond of sympathy between this relic of a departed *régime* and himself, some tie which he could not explain, but at times felt most strongly. He pondered over Pereira's speech about his own life and that of his violin strings, and vaguely wondered how much was figurative and how much was meant literally. For a quarter of a mile he wondered. By the time he had reached the bungalow he had forgotten his existence.

Bill Sandys, by the way, was a subaltern in the 173rd Light Horse, at the time of this story—in the early 'nineties—seconded for a staff job at the hill station. He shared a bungalow with two captains, and being the junior, naturally had to run the joint establishment, which was familiarly known as "The Pig and Whistle." Hence his housewifely cares. Merrow, a subaltern from a British regiment stationed down country, was on his way up to spend some weeks' language leave with him.

A WEEK later Sandys and Merrow were having a "peg" and a last smoke before turning in after the subscription dance at the club. The former, seated on the edge of his bed, was in his shirt sleeves, braces hanging down his back to ease the strain on his tightly-strapped overalls. His patent leather Wellingtons and spurs were muddy, for both youths had walked home down the hill and it had been raining. Merrow, more prompt in disrobing, was already clad in a virulent suit of pyjamas.

"I say, Bill," he asked, "what about polo to-morrow? My own hair-trunk will carry me for two chukkers, and if I can play the Gooseberry for two it'll do me top-hole."

"You can have Gooseberry. I sha'n't be playing, and the old beast has been having an easy time to-day. He's a camel-faced, cow-hocked son of a gun, but he knows the game."

There was a pause before Merrow continued: "Quite a good little hop to-night. I suppose you call this hill resort 'the frontier,' don't you?"

"Well, it is, you know."

"Yes, but I didn't know you were so civilized in such parts. I thought that the 'Frontier'—with a capital 'F'—which you fellows are always rubbing into us 'down-country chutney and banana-fed bounders,' was all hairy hill-men, long knives, chained rifles, badmashes, buckshot, and blood—the Real Thing, always next door to stern war, with no *frou-frou* and poodle-faking nonsense, such as slackers down below are given up to. But I see that you do have a bit of fun sometimes—what?"

"'Oh, go h'on, Captain. You are such a quiz,' as the barmaid said to the counter-jumper. I dare say you'll get a bit of excitement before you go down."

Sandys picked up his banjo and tried a few chords, and, laying down his pipe, began to whistle softly a haunting waltz, which had been twice encored that evening. He accompanied himself *arpeggio*, dragging his nail across the strings as if playing a guitar. He was a good player.

"That Spanish waltz is perfectly ripping," said Merrow, "especially where the cachucas click," and suiting his action to his words, he snapped his fingers to the music.

"Castanets, not cachucas, you mug!"

"All right, castanets then. I don't care. And then there is the part where the thing hiccoughs and sobs way down in the bass somewhere. It always catches me in the back of the neck. That's it."

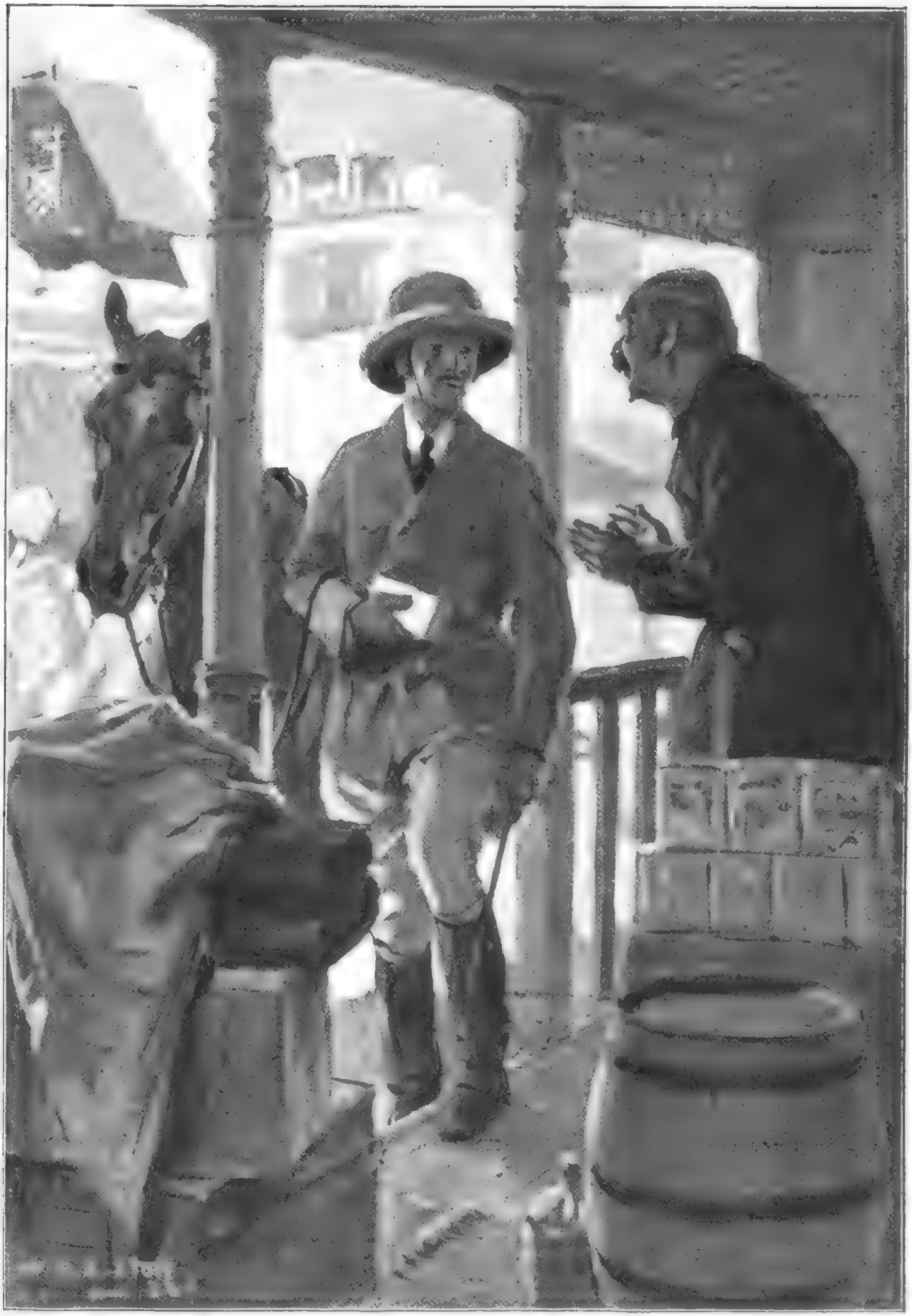
'That's what they call the throb of the 'eartstrings."

"Tum-ta-ra, tiddy-um-tum, tum-ta-ra, right-o," hummed Merrow, as he got up and flopped solemnly round the room in his grass shoes. "That little girl in pink sloshed with puce was a peach; danced this with her all three times. Didn't catch her name. But she was a flyer. 'Cur-r-se her—how I love her—cur-r-r-se her-r-r! Tum-ta-ra!'"

"Chuck it. You'll wake up Cox and the Snark, and there'll be the devil to pay!"

The two senior members of the establishment had not been to the dance but had spent the evening in a domestic game of picquet, and retired hours earlier. Merrow ceased his gyrations.

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"Mr. Sandys, these strings are my veree own private stock for my own violin. I nevaire selling own strings—even to you. I give one as present."

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" I say, who was the diplomat in the prehistoric swallow-tail coat you were bucking to this evening ? "

" Which ? "

" The snuff and butter-coloured old pantaloon with the very bald head and iron-grey side whiskers ? "

" Oh, old Pereira ! He's a sort of institution up here."

" So it seems. He was all over the place. But what was a bandicoot of that colour doing at a club dance ? "

" Well, he's privileged. Regular character. Keeps a small general shop on the Mall and lives all alone somewhere down the khud. Sells all sorts of fancy truck from polo sticks to acid drops, and has a pretty tough time competing with Buttinjee Jeejheeboy and the Parsee push. We all give him our custom when we can. He's really an artist, and a dam' rotten business man. Music is his hobby : plays the violin, and gives lessons whenever he can get a pupil. Good old buster, and I'm sorry for him, because he is so lonely and so far removed from both white and black. Poor old devil ! "

" Eight annas, I suppose ? "

' Yes. His name-board says ' Thomas Perry.' But I always call him San Thomé Pereira : I guess his remote ancestors on the European side knew more of the Prado in Lisbon than of Piccadilly in London town."

" What is he—retired Goanese cook ? "

" ' Noah, sar. Musician of noble European family, sar,' and as proud of it as a bagful of Lucifers. I don't know exactly where he hailed from originally—probably Goa or Marmagoa, but he has had a curious and sad life. He was court musician in some native State for years, and trained a brass, wood, and string orchestra of seventy-five performers."

" Help ! "

" Yes, sar, seventy-five ; seventy-seven, if you count the boy who played the triangle with his hands, the cymbals with his feet, and the bird-call with his mouth as three. He left in a hurry when he lost his wife and only son suddenly and couldn't discover whether it was jadoo, cholera, or powdered glass. Besides selling things and teaching music, he does odd jobs, and is a kind of assistant secretary, master of ceremonies, and general bandobast wallah for the club dances and gymkhanas ; superintends the music, feeding, etc., and acts as a combined major-domo and teetotum. He interests me and I like him. He is all nerves, and musical to his finger-tips, and composes, especially rhapsodies ; which I don't mind, so long as I've not got to play them on this old baja, which, of course, he despises. But he has a curious streak of mysticism, or telepathy, or whatever you call it, which beats me. And yet, somehow, I half understand. There, me lud, you 'ave the life-'istory of the condemned man in a thumbnail sketch, all for one penny ! "

AS he stopped talking Sandys again began to strum the movement which had what his friend called the hiccough in it. Suddenly there was a buzz on one note and the music ceased.

' High G frayed ! Thought it would. It's my last ; violin string really, and cadged at that. That's the worst of these cursed rains ; can't keep anything. Anyway it's the straight tip to us that it's bedtime. Come on, old son, lap up your nightcap. Hallo ! Hear that ? "

" What ? "

" Oh, 'ush and 'ark ! "

As both sat listening there was for some moments no sound but that of the rain on the corrugated iron roof of the veranda and the dismal dripping from the eaves. Then they heard a distant cry floating along the hillside. It was not the note of an owl, the shriek of a jackal, nor, indeed, the cry of any wild animal. It was the call of a human being in distress or pain. It was repeated.

" That's a man. Probably some wretched Kashmiri being beaten by Punjabis. There's a strike on amongst the dhobies. The Kashmiris are playing the part of blacklegs, and the Punjabis are doing some of the usual ' peaceful ' picketing. Same old game all over the world. No," he continued, when the sound rang out once again, " that's no native : that's a white man. Sounds like ' help ' ; foul play of some sort, anyway, so come on, Sancho Panza." He sang as he jumped up, " Johnnie, get your gun."

" Can't. It's in my uniform-case, and my blessed bearer's got the key. It'll take five minutes to wake him and get him up here."

" Ah ! That's not our frontier way of keeping our weapons. Never mind. One's enough. You take my niblick in the corner there." As he talked, Sandys rushed to his belt hanging on the wall and grabbed his revolver. Opening the breech, he spun the cylinder round. But he was a wary bird, and it was not enough for him to see the shining bases of six cartridges in the chambers, With a quick turn he ejected the cartridges on to his bed, and as he rapidly reloaded, felt the weight of each nice fat bullet. He then threw his British warm coat to his more lightly-clad friend and himself put on an old blazer. Picking up the hurricane lantern, ready lit in the corner of the room, and jamming a box of matches into his pocket, he darted out, revolver in hand, Merrow following. " Now listen for direction." The cry sounded again, already noticeably fainter.

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"That's it; half right, down the khud," and the pair started off through the forest, along the sloping hillside.

The rain had stopped, but the trees and undergrowth were dripping, and they had not gone fifty yards before they were soaked to the skin. Though the moon appeared at intervals from behind the passing clouds, its light hardly penetrated the dense foliage, of which the rain had brought out all the scents —the sweet, pungent smell of the deodars in some places almost overpowered by the sickly stench of the pithy snake plants. Maintaining their direction as well as they could, they stumbled and slithered on, halting every fifty yards to correct their course by the sound which now came weaker and at longer intervals. Since it was difficult going, and a fall with both hands full might have caused Sandys to shoot himself or Merrow, the latter, after a few stumbles, took the lantern and led the way. When they had covered about a third of a mile the trees grew thinner, and they found themselves slightly above and at the edge of a level, cleared space at the back of a small bungalow. Verandas hid the two sides of the house, which were in deep shadow, but at the back was an almost blank wall unscreened by anything below the eaves, with one window on the ground floor.

"Must be the place," gasped Sandys, who then suddenly slipped on to his back and tobogganed down the slope into the garden. "Damnation! Never knew there was a house there; never saw it before." Merrow followed on his feet.

As they reached the level they both heard a deep groan, which appeared to come straight from the wall facing them. At that moment the moon peeped out from behind a cloud and threw a flood of light on the scene. The whitewashed wall in front, with its one sinister window, stood out brilliant against the dark background of trees.

"Man alive! What's that?" whispered Merrow, hoarsely, as he gripped his friend's arm and pointed to the black rectangular patch of window. Both stood without drawing breath, for what they saw in the moonlight was fantastically horrible. Just above one corner of the window-sill was a Thing, a caricature less than lifesize of a human mask. Oval in shape, it was tense and shiny, and on it were rudely-marked features as of some nightmare grotesque. Where the eyes should have been appeared to be two deepset, orbless caverns, and underneath the suggestion of a nose. Below that, running round one side of the face, was an aperture resembling a mouth drawn down in a lopsided leer of obscene mirth, or contorted in a rictus of anguish. It was human and yet not human, and, like all monstrosities, inspired mingled horror and repulsion amounting to nausea. On the window-sill, and extending over its edge, was a dark stain, which glistened stickily where it caught the light. Crowning horror, this object actually moved! It raised itself from the sill, wobbled round feebly in a circle, and flopped back to its original position. As it did so it emitted another groan.

THAT broke the spell. Almost sick with disgust and apprehension, the two rushed forward to the window. They then discovered that what had seemed to be a wizened face was in reality the shiny top of a man's bald head, the supposed features being great smears of blood. The head was that of an old man in a nightshirt, whose body was leaning out of the window. He was still alive, and his face was covered with blood.

"Hold on, Merrow," said Sandys. "Give me the lantern. I only want one hand for the revolver, and you need two for the niblick. We'll go round by the front, side by side. The swine who did this may still be hanging round, though I don't think it likely, or he would have finished the job." Walking abreast, they passed under the gloomy veranda on the right, and so to the entrance door in the front of the house.

It was a small bungalow. The first room they entered was undisturbed, but the corresponding room on the right, through which they passed on their way to the back of the house, presented a beastly sight. From the bed in one corner all the clothes had been dragged into a heap on the floor; tables and chairs were overturned and smashed; and bed-clothes and floor were covered with blood in great patches, which showed up black in the light of the lantern. Without pause they hurried, slipping as they went, through this filthy slaughter-house back into the room at the window of which they had seen the victim. Gently they half led, half carried, him to the bed in the next room.

"Knifed?" whispered Merrow, who was somewhat unnerved.

"Looks like it," was the reply. "Here, you get some water from the ghussel khana —find out where he's wounded. I'll just have a dart round to find out if the murderer is prowling about still." Sandys picked up the lantern and turned to go. As he wheeled round, the light for the first time fell on the face of the wounded man, above whom Merrow was standing.

"Why, hang it, man," the latter shouted, "if it isn't the old bandicoot sportsman!"

Sandys, in the next room, turned back. "Who do you mean? Is it someone you know?"

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"Man alive! What's that?" whispered Merrion, hoarsely, as

"It's that old Portugoose pal of yours, who was at the ball-dance to-night."

Sandys came up and held the light over the prone figure. "My God! It's poor old Pereira. So it is. You take the gun and scout around. Leave me the lantern. No—light the candles in the next room. I'll look after him. Catch."

Merrow caught the thrown box of matches, found two overturned candles, lit them, and sallied forth to reconnoitre, revolver in one hand, lantern in the other.

As Sandys busied himself, fetching water, ransacking the drawers for materials for first aid, he carried on a conversation aloud, much in the same way as a man hisses when grooming a horse. "Poor old Pereira! I wonder who's done this, and why? His whole possessions are not worth ten dibs, unless he's a miser and has his hoard here. Probably revenge —some dirty Pathan. That swine Yussuf, I shouldn't wonder. Wish I'd brought my flask." On washing the wounds he found a gash from the left eye to the chin, which all but laid open the whole side of the face; and one on the outside of each fore-arm showing attempts to ward off blows directed at his body.

The old fellow also must have clutched the knife-blade, for the palm of his right hand was almost severed. A deep stab in the region of the heart had evidently been intended as the *coup de grâce*. As he lay inert and semi-conscious, groaning feebly from time to time, it did not take long to find out all the places from which blood was flowing. Sandys bound up the wounds tightly with strips torn from the sheets, but

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he pointed to the black rectangular patch of window. Both stood without drawing the moonlight was fantastically horrible.

was for a moment nonplussed as to how to improvise tourniquets for the arms. He finally tied a necktie above each elbow and round the right wrist and twisted each tight with a tobacco-pipe. Perry meanwhile rambled on spasmodically, mingling English, Urdu, Pushtu, and what Sandys guessed must be Portuguese. Having made the patient as comfortable as possible, he washed the blood off his hands in the bathroom, and then sat down on the bedside holding his friend's left hand between both his own. Whenever the latter appeared to be getting excited he patted his hand and said, " It's all right, old Pereira. It's me—Sandys." There was no sign of Merrow, and the amateur nurse,

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slightly worried, was about to call out, when he heard a shout and a revolver-shot close by the bungalow. Putting down Perry's hand, he jumped up to rush outside, when a second shot rang out, followed by the yelps of a dog, which gradually died away in the distance. This reassured him. A moment later Merrow came in.

"Well?"

"Thought I saw someone slinking round the servants' quarters and loosed off a couple of rounds, and found it was a 'Pi.' Hope I didn't hit the poor brute. Otherwise nothing. The fellow has got clean away. There are three nowkars, a khansamc, a Mussulman bearer, and a sweeper. All suspiciously fast asleep and took a lot of waking up. All three swore they had heard nothing. But they were in a paralytic funk. They must have heard Perry's shouts right enough, but dared not leave their huts. How is he?" He jerked his head towards the figure on the bed.

"Still alive, but I don't know how far he's done in—four deepish cuts, one near the heart. Bleeding badly. From his incoherent rambling I imagine that he woke up from his sleep to find Yussuf—the Pathan he sacked not long ago—standing over him, and was at once knifed. I've done my best to tie him up, but the poor chap may be bleeding to death for all I know. Must get a doctor. Worse luck, the Civil surgeon lives a long way from here."

"I have it. How far is this from Rowell's Hotel?"

"About half a mile."

"Well, I believe there is an Army Medical captain, called Shortham, stopping there. Came up with me. I wonder if he could take on a case in another man's beat? Haven't these medicos got some etiquette of their own?"

"Yes—but that doesn't hold when it's an urgent case of life and death. Write him a chit, and we'll send the bearer up with it to wait for him and guide him back."

Merrow discovered a paper and pencil after a short search, and at once sat down. After a minute he looked up. "How d'you spell hemorrhage?"

"I don't know," said Sandys; "do your best; he'll guess what you mean; or say that the victim is bleeding like a pig."

Sandys then went to the veranda and shouted for a servant.

There was a confused reply from the servants' quarters, and three figures, each hurriedly tying on his pugaree, came shambling up into the light of the lantern and salaamed nervously.

Sandys did not waste time in questioning the men; he knew his native too well. They had said they had seen and heard nothing, and, if it had been an earthquake, they would continue to have seen and heard nothing. Merely telling them in choice Hindustani what he thought about them, he gave orders that the bearer was to take a note up to the hotel, insist that the doctor sahib should be awakened, and bring him back to the bungalow as quickly as possible.

That menial began to whimper, and without shame confessed that he was afraid to go alone, as there might be other "badmashes" and "looswallahs" skulking round. Finally the bearer and the sweeper departed together, each armed with a staff and a lantern. Setting the third man to light a fire and boil water, Sandys and Merrow wrapped themselves up in blankets and kept watch over Perry, who occasionally moaned and muttered in evident terror, the only coherent words being "Yussuf" and "help."

AFTER the two young officers had drowsed and shivered for about three-quarters of an hour, a step was heard on the veranda, and the light of a lantern shone into the room. Merrow uncoiled himself and, still in his blanket, slouched out to the front to greet his medical acquaintance and explain matters. The latter was nattily dressed, and carried one of those doctor's bags which suggest knives and horrible instruments. He looked round in some surprise and obviously did not recognize Merrow.

"Good morning. Did you send for me?"

"Yes," said Merrow. "I——"

"Is it your wife?"

"My wife? Why, Shortham, don't you know me? It's me—Merrow. I wrote the note."

"So it's you, is it? It's not surprising that I didn't recognize you. The signature on the note was illegible, and practically all I could read was 'very urgent,' 'stabbed,' and a word that looked as if it were meant for 'hemorrhage.' But don't let's waste time. Show me the lady. Who is she?"

"There isn't any lady."

"No lady?" The speaker looked rather ruefully at his smart trousers and boots and nice white cuffs. "Well, what is it?"

"It's poor old Perry, who keeps that general store in the Mall—been cut up by a Pathan."

While the two were talking they reached the doorway of the bedroom, which still presented a horrible sight. Sandys from the head of the bed greeted the doctor.

Shortham looked about in some disgust. "This is really the Civil surgeon's job, I think; I am butting in. But the man seems in a bad way. Let's see what we can do at once."

With that he went up to the bed and with the assistance of Sandys, who explained

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where the cuts were and what he had already done, he carried out a careful examination and washed and redressed all the wounds. In half an hour the patient was made more or less comfortable.

" Well, that's done," said Shortham, finally. " I can't do any more now, nor can you. As I said, it's a case for the Civil surgeon really, but we won't worry him now. I've done the necessary, and will hand the patient over to him to-morrow morning. I can't say if the man will live or not; but, if he does, it will be due to what you have done for him before I came. He will owe his life to you." He looked at Sandys. " I'll stay now I'm here and watch him, and if he is fit to be moved we will run him up to the hospital in the morning. You two boys push off home and get some sleep. You've done a good night's work."

" D'you think he has any chance ? " said Sandys. " He's a friend of mine."

" Yes; he has a sporting chance. But he's an old man, and has had a great shock and lost a lot of blood. He may pull through. When you get back send me down some brandy from your bungalow, if you have any."

" Yes, I will. Are you sure I can't help if I stay ? I don't like to leave him," continued Sandys.

" You can do nothing. It rests with himself now whether he pulls through or not. You get to bed. Leave me the revolver, by the way."

The two youths shed their blankets and departed silently, taking with them two of the servants to bring back the brandy. As they trudged homewards, Sandys's mind reverted to the cry for help that he had heard two hours earlier, the cessation of the music which had enabled him to hear it, and the cause for the cessation of the music. And the old man's talk about his violin and violin strings came back to his mind.

THE arrival of dawn was announced by the sickly light in the sky as the two draggled, muddy, and bloodstained figures slouched along the veranda of the " Pig and Whistle " into the dining-room.

Merrow sank into an arm-chair. He was considerably upset by what he had been through. He was also wondering if he had not, after all, been somewhat hasty in his judgment of the frontier. But though he was shocked, his emotions were physical and on the surface. Sandys, on the other hand, though he kept himself better under control, was far the more deeply affected of the two. He now fully realized how fond he was of the old man he had just left in such a terrible condition, and his innermost feelings had been aroused. After dispatching the brandy as promised, without speaking, he produced glasses, whisky, and soda, and set himself to cheer up his outwardly more shaken companion.

" Well, what about it ? I hope there's been trouble enough to please you—for one night, anyway—you sanguinary-minded seeker after thrills ? Say ' when.' I expect those two brutes who have been hogging it so snug and comfy in there "—he nodded in the direction of the bedrooms—" will nose out the drink and join us pretty quick."

Forced as was his note, he was justified in his surmise, for hardly had two bottles of soda fizzed than the bead curtain across the doorway on one side parted, and the Snark's face appeared, pop-eyed with sleep and astonishment.

" Well——" he began. Then, noting the condition of the two before him, he added: " Wha-what the devil've you fellows been doin' ? "

Before a reply could be given a long-drawn whistle and the repetition of the same expressive words denoted the arrival of Captain Cox. His nature was the more flippant: " Seems to have been some dirty work at the cross—I thought you two went dancing to a ball-party ? What's happened ? "

There being no immediate answer, both of the new arrivals advanced into the room, staring at the objects in front of them. They made alternate guesses :—

" Ghazis ? "
" Thugs ? "
" Dacoits ? "
" Dog fight ? "
" Landslip ? "
" Leopard ? "
" Mutiny ? "
" Murder ? "

" Yes," interposed Sandys, seriously—" that's just what it may be. Some brute has cut up poor old Pereira, and it's a toss-up whether he'll pull through."

" Good God ! At the hop ? "

" No, no."

" But how have you two got mixed up in it ? "

" Merrow'll tell you," replied Sandys. " He's recovered now. I'm a bit done." The truth was that he had no desire to talk.

Indeed, he hardly heard a word of the ensuing lurid and gushing narrative poured out by his overwrought partner of the night's adventure. When it was finished, and all questions had been asked and answered, conversation died away. There was silence. Then suddenly the suspicion of a breeze, like a breath from off the distant snow-peaks, made the Japanese bead curtains rattle and dispersed the straight-

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As he picked up his beloved banjo there was a sharp, metallic "ping," and the high G snapped and coiled round his wrist.

ascending spirals of cigarette-smoke into swirling threads. Its chill brought the thoughts of the four men down to actualities. They all shivered.

"I'm going to turn in again," said the practical Cox. "I say, what fools we've been to let you two stay here and freeze in your wet kit! You'd both better take a go of quinine, or you'll be for it. Come on."

The Snark and Merrow followed Cox's example, and went to their bedrooms. But Bill Sandys stayed behind, sick at heart, wondering how things were going with Pereira. The answer was not long in coming. As he crossed the room and picked up his beloved banjo in order to put it away, there was a sharp, metallic "ping," accompanied by a noise like a tap on a drum, and the high G snapped and coiled round his wrist. He started and shivered again, but not from cold. Then, with bowed head and dimmed eyes, he reverently freed his hand.

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AUNT AGATHA TAKES THE COUNT

BY

P. G. WODEHOUSE

ILLUSTRATED BY A. WALLIS MILLS

"JEEVES," I said, "we've backed a winner."

"Sir?"

"Coming to this place, I mean. Here we are in a topping hotel, with fine weather, good cooking, golf, bathing, gambling of every variety, and my Aunt Agatha miles away on the other side of the English Channel. I ask you, what could be sweeter?"

I had had to leg it, if you remember, with considerable speed from London because my Aunt Agatha was on my track with a hatchet as the result of the breaking-off of my engagement to Honoria Glossop. The thing hadn't been my fault, but I couldn't have convinced Aunt Agatha of that if I'd argued for a week: so it had seemed to me that the judicious course to pursue was to buzz briskly off while the buzzing was good. I was standing now at the window of the extremely decent suite which I'd taken at the Hotel Splendide at Roville on the French coast, and, as I looked down at the people popping to and fro in the sunshine, and reflected that in about a quarter of an hour I was due to lunch with a girl who was the exact opposite of Honoria Glossop in every way, I felt dashed uplifted. Gay, genial, happy-go-lucky, and devil-may-care, if you know what I mean.

I had met this girl—Aline Hemmingway her name was—for the first time on the train coming from Paris. She was going to Roville to wait there for a brother who was due to arrive from England. I had helped her with her baggage, got into conversation, had a bite of dinner with her in the restaurant-car, and the result was we had become remarkably chummy. I'm a bit apt, as a rule, to give the modern girl a miss, but there was something different about Aline Hemmingway.

I turned round, humming a blithe melody, and Jeeves shied like a startled mustang.

I had rather been expecting some such display of emotion on the man's part, for I was trying out a fairly fruity cummerbund that morning—one of those silk contrivances, you know, which you tie round your waist, something on the order of a sash, only more substantial. I had seen it in a shop the day before and hadn't been able to resist it, but I'd known all along that there might be trouble with Jeeves. It was a pretty brightish scarlet.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, in a sort of hushed voice "You are surely not proposing to appear in public in that thing?"

"What, Cuthbert the Cummerbund?" I said, in a careless, debonair way, passing it off. "Rather!"

"I should not advise it, sir, really I shouldn't."

"Why not?"

"The effect, sir, is loud in the extreme."

I tackled the blighter squarely. I mean to say, nobody knows better than I do that Jeeves is a master-mind and all that, but, dash it, a fellow must call his soul his own. You can't be a serf to your valet.

"You know, the trouble with you, Jeeves," I said, "is that you're too—what's the word I want?—too bally insular. You can't realize that you aren't in Piccadilly all the time. In a place like this, simply dripping with the gaiety and *joie-de-vivre* of France, a bit of colour and a touch of the poetic is expected of you. Why, last night at the Casino I saw a chappie in a full evening suit of yellow velvet."

"Nevertheless, sir——"

"Jeeves," I said, firmly, "my mind is made up. I'm in a foreign country; it's a

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corking day; God's in his heaven and all's right with the world, and this cummerbund seems to me to be called for."

"Very good, sir," said Jeeves, coldly.

Dashed upsetting, this sort of thing. If there's one thing that gives me the pip, it's unpleasantness in the home; and I could see that relations were going to be pretty fairly strained for a while. I suppose the old brow must have been a bit furrowed or something, for Aline Hemmingway spotted that things were wrong directly we sat down to lunch.

"You seem depressed, Mr. Wooster," she said. "Have you been losing money at the Casino?"

"No," I said. "As a matter of fact, I won quite a goodish sum last night."

"But something is the matter. What is it?"

"Well, to tell you the truth," I said, "I've just had rather a painful scene with my man, and it's shaken me a bit. He doesn't like this cummerbund."

"Why, I've just been admiring it. I think it's very becoming."

"No, really?"

"It has rather a Spanish effect."

"Exactly what I thought myself. Extraordinary you should have said that. A touch of the hidalgo, what? Sort of Vincente y Blasco What's-his-name stuff. The jolly old hidalgo off to the bull-fight, what?"

"Yes. Or a corsair of the Spanish Main."

"Absolutely! I say, you know, you have bucked me up. It's a rummy thing about you—how sympathetic you are, I mean. The ordinary girl you meet to-day is all bobbed hair and gaspers, but you——"

I was about to continue in this strain, when somebody halted at our table, and the girl jumped up.

"Sidney!" she cried.

The chappie who had anchored in our midst was a small, round cove with a face rather like a sheep. He wore pince-nez, his expression was benevolent, and he had on one of those collars which button at the back. A parson, in fact.

"Well, my dear," he said, beaming pretty freely, "here I am at last."

"Are you very tired?"

"Not at all. A most enjoyable journey, in which tedium was rendered impossible by the beauty of the scenery through which we passed and the entertaining conversation of my fellow-travellers. But may I be presented to this gentleman?" he said, peering at me through the pince-nez.

"This is Mr. Wooster," said the girl, "who was very kind to me coming from Paris. Mr. Wooster, this is my brother."

We shook hands, and the brother went off to get a wash.

"Sidney's such a dear," said the girl. "I know you'll like him."

"Seems a topper."

"I do hope he will enjoy his stay here. It's so seldom he gets a holiday. His vicar overworks him dreadfully."

"Vicars are the devil, what?"

"I wonder if you will be able to spare any time to show him round the place? I can see he's taken such a fancy to you. But, of course, it would be a bother, I suppose, so——"

"Rather not. Only too delighted." For half a second I thought of patting her hand, then I felt I'd better wait a bit. "I'll do anything, absolutely anything."

"It's awfully kind of you."

"For you," I said, "I would——"

At this point the brother returned, and the conversation became what you might call general.

AFTER lunch I fairly curvetted back to my suite, with a most extraordinary braced sensation going all over me like a rash.

"Jeeves," I said, "you were all wrong about that cummerbund. It went like a breeze from the start."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Made an absolutely outstanding hit. The lady I was lunching with admired it. Her brother admired it. The waiter looked as if he admired it. Well, anything happened since I left?"

"Yes, sir. Mrs. Gregson has arrived at the hotel."

A chappie I know who went shooting, and was potted by one of his brother-sportsmen in mistake for a rabbit, once told me that it was several seconds before he realized that he had contributed to the day's bag. For about a tenth of a minute everything seemed quite O.K., and then suddenly he got it. It was just the same with me. It took about five seconds for this fearful bit of news to sink in.

"What!" I yelled. "Aunt Agatha here?"

"Yes, sir."

"She can't be."

"I have seen her, sir."

"But how did she get here?"

"The express from Paris has just arrived, sir."

"But, I mean, how the dickens did she know I was here?"

"You left a forwarding-address at the flat for your correspondence, sir. No doubt Mrs. Gregson obtained it from the hall-porter."

"But I told the chump not to give it away to a soul."

"That would hardly baffle a lady of Mrs. Gregson's forceful personality, sir."

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" Jeeves, I'm in the soup."

" Yes, sir."

" Right up to the hocks ! "

" Yes, sir."

" What shall I do ? "

" I fear I have nothing to suggest, sir."

I eyed the man narrowly. Dashed aloof his manner was. I saw what was the matter, of course. He was still brooding over that cummerbund.

" I shall go for a walk, Jeeves," I said.

" Yes, sir ? "

" A good long walk."

" Very good, sir."

" And if—er—if anybody asks for me, tell 'em you don't know when I'll be back."

TO people who don't know my Aunt Agatha I find it extraordinarily difficult to explain why it is that she has always put the wind up me to such a frightful extent. I mean, I'm not dependent on her financially, or anything like that. It's simply personality, I've come to the conclusion. You see, all through my childhood and when I was a kid at school she was always able to turn me inside out with a single glance, and I haven't come out from under the 'fluence yet. We run to height a bit in our family, and there's about five-foot-nine of Aunt Agatha, topped off with a beaky nose, an eagle eye, and a lot of grey hair, and the general effect is pretty formidable.

Her arrival in Roville at this juncture had made things more than a bit complicated for me. What to do? Leg it quick before she could get hold of me, would no doubt have been the advice most fellows would have given me. But the situation wasn't as simple as that. I was in much the same position as the cat on the garden-wall who, when on the point of becoming matey with the cat next door, observes the boot-jack sailing through the air. If he stays where he is, he gets it in the neck; if he biffs, he has to start all over again where he left off. I didn't like the prospect of being collared by Aunt Agatha, but on the other hand I simply barred the notion of leaving Roville by the night-train and parting from Aline Hemmingway. Absolutely a man's cross-roads, if you know what I mean.

I prowled about the neighbourhood all the afternoon and evening, then I had a bit of dinner at a quiet restaurant in the town and trickled cautiously back to the hotel. Jeeves was popping about in the suite.

" There is a note for you, sir," he said, " on the mantelpiece."

The blighter's manner was still so cold and unchummy that I bit the bullet and had a dash at being airy.

" A note, eh ? "

" Yes, sir. Mrs. Gregson's maid brought it shortly after you had left."

" Tra-la-la ! " I said.

" Precisely, sir."

I opened the note.

" She wants me to look in on her after dinner some time."

" Yes, sir ? "

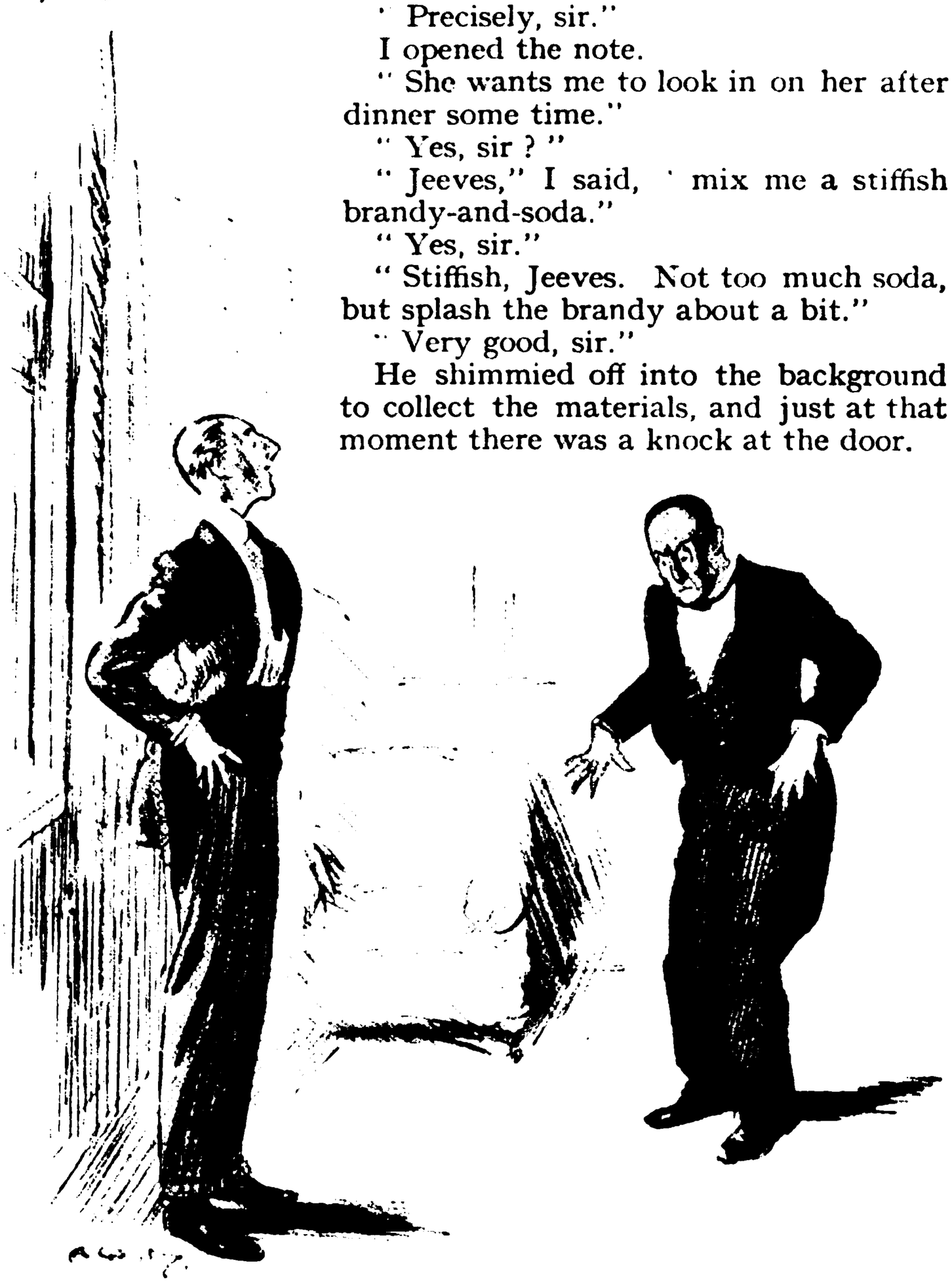
" Jeeves," I said, " mix me a stiffish brandy-and-soda."

" Yes, sir."

" Stiffish, Jeeves. Not too much soda, but splash the brandy about a bit."

" Very good, sir."

He shimmied off into the background to collect the materials, and just at that moment there was a knock at the door.



Jeeves shied like a startled mustang. "I beg your pardon, sir," he said. "You are surely not proposing to appear in public in that thing ? "

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I'm bound to say it was a shock. My heart stood still, and I bit my tongue.

" Come in," I bleated.

But it wasn't Aunt Agatha after all. It was Aline Hemmingway, looking rather rattled, and her brother, looking like a sheep with a secret sorrow.

" Oh, Mr. Wooster ! " said the girl, in a sort of gasping way.

" Oh, what-ho ! " I said. " Won't you come in ? Take a seat or two."

" I don't know how to begin."

" Eh ? " I said. " Is anything up ? "

" Poor Sidney—it was my fault—I ought never to have let him go there alone."

At this point the brother, who had been standing by wrapped in the silence, gave a little cough, like a sheep caught in the mist on a mountain-top.

" The fact is, Mr. Wooster," he said, " I have been gambling at the Casino."

" Oh ! " I said. " Did you click ? "

He sighed heavily.

" If you mean, was I successful, I must answer in the negative. I rashly persisted in the view that the colour red, having appeared no fewer than seven times in succession, must inevitably at no distant date give place to black. I was in error. I lost my little all, Mr. Wooster."

" Tough luck," I said.

" I left the Casino, and returned to the hotel. There I encountered one of my parishioners, a Colonel Musgrave, who chanced to be holiday-making over here. I —er—induced him to cash me a cheque for one hundred pounds on my bank in London."

" Well, that was all to the good, what ? " I said, hoping to induce the poor egg to look on the bright side. " I mean bit of luck finding someone to slip it into, first crack out of the box."

" On the contrary, Mr. Wooster, it did but make matters worse. I burn with shame as I make the confession, but I went back to the Casino and lost the entire sum."

" I say ! " I said. " You *are* having a night out ! "

" And," concluded the chappie, " the most lamentable feature of the whole affair is that I have no funds in the bank to meet the cheque, when presented."

I'M free to confess that I gazed at him with no little interest and admiration. Never in my life before had I encountered a curate so genuinely all to the mustard. Little as he might look like one of the lads of the village, he certainly appeared to be the real tabasco.

" Colonel Musgrave," he went on, gulping somewhat, " is not a man who would be likely to overlook the matter. He is a hard man. He will expose me to my vic-ah. My vic-ah is a hard man. I shall be ruined if Colonel Musgrave presents that cheque, and he leaves for England to-night."

" Mr. Wooster," the girl burst out, " won't you, won't you help us ? Oh, do say you will. We must have the money to get back that cheque from Colonel Musgrave before nine o'clock—he leaves on the nine-twenty. I was at my wits' end what to do, when I remembered how kind you had always been and how you had told me at lunch that you had won some money at the Casino last night. Mr. Wooster, will you lend it to us, and take these as security ? " And, before I knew what she was doing, she had dived into her bag, produced a case, and opened it. " My pearls," she said. " I don't know what they are worth—they were a present from my poor father—but I know they must be worth ever so much more than the amount we want."

Dashed embarrassing. Made me feel like a pawnbroker. More than a touch of popping the watch about the whole business.

" No, I say, really," I protested, the haughty old spirit of the Woosters kicking like a mule at the idea. " There's no need of any security, you know, or any rot of that kind. I mean to say, among pals, you know, what ? Only too glad the money'll come in useful."

And I fished it out and pushed it across. The brother shook his head.

" Mr. Wooster," he said, " we appreciate your generosity, your beautiful, heartening confidence in us, but we cannot permit this.'

" What Sidney means," said the girl, " is that you really don't know anything about us, when you come to think of it. You mustn't risk lending all this money without any security at all to two people who, after all, are almost strangers."

" Oh, don't say that ! "

" I do say it. If I hadn't thought that you would be quite businesslike about this, I would never have dared to come to you. If you will just give me a receipt, as a matter of form——"

" Oh, well."

I wrote out the receipt and handed it over, feeling more or less of an ass.

" Here you are," I said.

The girl took the piece of paper, shoved it in her bag, grabbed the money and slipped it to brother Sidney, and then, before I knew what was happening, she had darted at me, kissed me, and legged it from the room.

I don't know when I've been so rattled. The whole thing was so dashed sudden and unexpected. Through a sort of mist I could see that Jeeves had appeared from the background and was helping the brother on with his coat ; and then the brother came up to me and grasped my hand.

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"I cannot thank you sufficiently, Mr. Wooster!"

"Oh, right-ho!"

"You have saved my good name. Good name in man or woman, dear my lord," he said, massaging the fin with some fervour, "is the immediate jewel of their souls. Who steals my purse steals trash. 'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands. But he that filches from me my good name robs me of that which not enriches him and makes me poor indeed. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Good night, Mr. Wooster."



Before I knew what was happening, the girl had darted at me, kissed me, and legged it from the room.

"Good night, old thing," I said.

"Your brandy-and-soda, sir," said Jeeves, as the door shut.

I blinked at him.

"Oh, there you are!"

"Yes, sir."

"Rather a sad affair, Jeeves."

"Yes, sir."

"Lucky I happened to have all that money handy."

"Well—er—yes, sir."

"You speak as though you didn't think much of it."

"It is not my place to criticize your actions, sir, but I will venture to say that I think you behaved a little rashly."

"What, lending that money?"

"Yes, sir. These fashionable French watering-places are notoriously infested by dishonest characters."

This was a bit too thick.

"Now, look here, Jeeves," I said, "I can stand a lot, but when it comes to your casting asp-whatever-the-word-is on the sweetest girl in the world and a bird in Holy Orders——"

"Perhaps I am over-suspicious, sir. But I have seen a great deal of these resorts. When I was in the employment of Lord Frederick Ranelagh, shortly before I entered your service, his lordship was very neatly swindled by a criminal known, I believe, by the sobriquet of Soapy Sid, who scraped acquaintance with us in Monte Carlo with the assistance of a female accomplice. I have never forgotten the circumstance."

"I don't want to butt in on your reminiscences, Jeeves," I said, coldly, "but you're talking through your hat. How can there have been anything fishy about this business? They've left me the pearls, haven't they? Very well, then, think before you speak. You had better be tooling down to the desk now and having these things shoved in the hotel safe." I picked up the case and opened it. "Oh, Great Scot!"

The bally thing was empty!

"Oh, my Lord!" I said, staring, "don't tell me there's been dirty work at the cross-roads after all!"

"Precisely, sir. It was in exactly the same manner that Lord Frederick was swindled on the occasion to which I have alluded. While his female accomplice was

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gratefully embracing his lordship, Soapy Sid substituted a duplicate case for the one containing the pearls, and went off with the jewels, the money, and the receipt. On the strength of the receipt he subsequently demanded from his lordship the return of the pearls, and his lordship, not being able to produce them, was obliged to pay a heavy sum in compensation. It is a simple but effective ruse."

I felt as if the bottom had dropped out of things with a jerk. I mean to say, Aline Hemmingway, you know. What I mean is, if Love hadn't actually awakened in my heart, there's no doubt it was having a jolly good stab at it, and the thing was only a question of days. And all the time—well, I mean, dash it, you know.

"Soapy Sid? Sid! *Sidney!* Brother Sidney! Why, by Jove, Jeeves, do you think that parson was Soapy Sid?"

"Yes, sir."

"But it seems so extraordinary. Why, his collar buttoned at the back—I mean, he would have deceived a bishop. Do you really think he was Soapy Sid?"

"Yes, sir. I recognized him directly he came into the room."

I stared at the blighter.

"You recognized him?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then, dash it all," I said, deeply moved, "I think you might have told me."

"I thought it would save disturbance and unpleasantness if I merely abstracted the case from the man's pocket as I assisted him with his coat, sir. Here it is."

He laid another case on the table beside the dud one, and, by Jove, you couldn't tell them apart. I opened it, and there were the good old pearls, as merry and bright as dammit, smiling up at me. I gazed feebly at the man. I was feeling a bit overwrought.

"Jeeves," I said, "you're an absolute genius!"

"Yes, sir."

Relief was surging over me in great chunks by now. I'd almost forgotten that a woman had toyed with my heart and thrown it away like a worn-out tube of tooth-paste and all that sort of thing. What seemed to me the important item was the fact that, thanks to Jeeves, I was not going to be called on to cough up several thousand quid.

"It looks to me as though you had saved the old home. I mean, even a chappie endowed with the immortal rind of dear old Sid is hardly likely to have the nerve to come back and retrieve these little chaps."

"I should imagine not, sir."

"Well, then—— Oh, I say, you don't think they are just paste or anything like that?"

"No, sir. These are genuine pearls, and extremely valuable."

"Well, then, dash it, I'm on velvet. Absolutely reclining on the good old plush! I may be down a hundred quid, but I'm up a jolly good string of pearls. Am I right or wrong?"

"Hardly that, sir. I think that you will have to restore the pearls."

"What! To Sid? Not while I have my physique!"

"No, sir. To their rightful owner."

"But who is their rightful owner?"

"Mrs. Gregson, sir."

"What! How do you know?"

"It was all over the hotel an hour ago that Mrs. Gregson's pearls had been abstracted. The man Sid travelled from Paris in the same train as Mrs. Gregson, and no doubt marked them down. I was speaking to Mrs. Gregson's maid shortly before you came in, and she informed me that the manager of the hotel is now in Mrs. Gregson's suite."

"And having a devil of a time, what?"

"So I should be disposed to imagine, sir."

The situation was beginning to unfold before me.

"I'll go and give them back to her, eh? It'll put me one up, what?"

"If I might make the suggestion, sir, I think it would strengthen your position if you were to affect to discover the pearls in Mrs. Gregson's suite—say, in a bureau drawer."

"I don't see why."

"I think I am right, sir."

"Well, I stand on you. If you say so—I'll be popping, what?"

"The sooner the better, sir."

LONG before I reached Aunt Agatha's lair I could tell that the hunt was up. Divers chappies in hotel uniform and not a few chambermaids of sorts were hanging about in the corridor, and through the panels I could hear a mixed assortment of voices, with Aunt Agatha's topping the lot. I knocked, but no one took any notice, so I trickled in. Among those present I noticed a chambermaid in hysterics, Aunt Agatha with her hair bristling, and a whiskered cove who looked like a bandit, as no doubt he was, being the proprietor of the hotel.

"Oh, hallo," I said. "I got your note, Aunt Agatha."

She waved me away. No welcoming smile for Bertram.

"Oh, don't bother me now," she snapped, looking at me as if I were more or less the last straw.

"Something up?"

"Yes, yes, yes! I've lost my pearls."

"Pearls? Pearls? Pearls?" I said. "No, really? Dashed annoying. Where did you see them last?"

"What *does* it matter where I saw them last? They have been stolen."

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Here Wilfred the Whisker-King, who seemed to have been taking a rest between rounds, stepped into the ring again and began to talk rapidly in French. Cut to the quick he seemed. The chambermaid whooped in the corner.

"Sure you've looked everywhere?" I asked.

"Of course I've looked everywhere."

"Well, you know, I've often lost a collar-stud and——"

"Do try not to be so maddening, Bertie! I have enough to bear without your imbecilities. Oh, be quiet! Be quiet!" she shouted in the sort of voice used by sergeant-majors and those who call the cattle home across the Sands of Dee. And such was the magnetism of what Jeeves called her forceful personality that Wilfred subsided as though he had run into a wall. The chambermaid continued to go strong.

"I say," I said, "I think there's something the matter with this girl. Isn't she crying or something?"

"She stole my pearls! I am convinced of it."

This started the whisker-specialist off again, and I left them at it and wandered off on a tour round the room. I slipped the pearls out of the case and decanted them into a drawer. By the time I'd done this and had leisure to observe the free-for-all once more, Aunt Agatha had reached the frozen grande-dame stage and was putting the last of the bandits through it in the voice she usually reserves for snubbing waiters in restaurants.

"I tell you, my good man, for the hundredth time, that I have searched thoroughly—everywhere. Why you should imagine that I have overlooked so elementary——"

"I say," I said, "don't want to interrupt you and all that sort of thing, but aren't these the little chaps?"

I pulled the pearls out of the drawer and held them up. "I say, don't want to interrupt you and all that sort of thing, but aren't these the little chaps?"

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I pulled them out of the drawer and held them up.

"These look like pearls, what?"

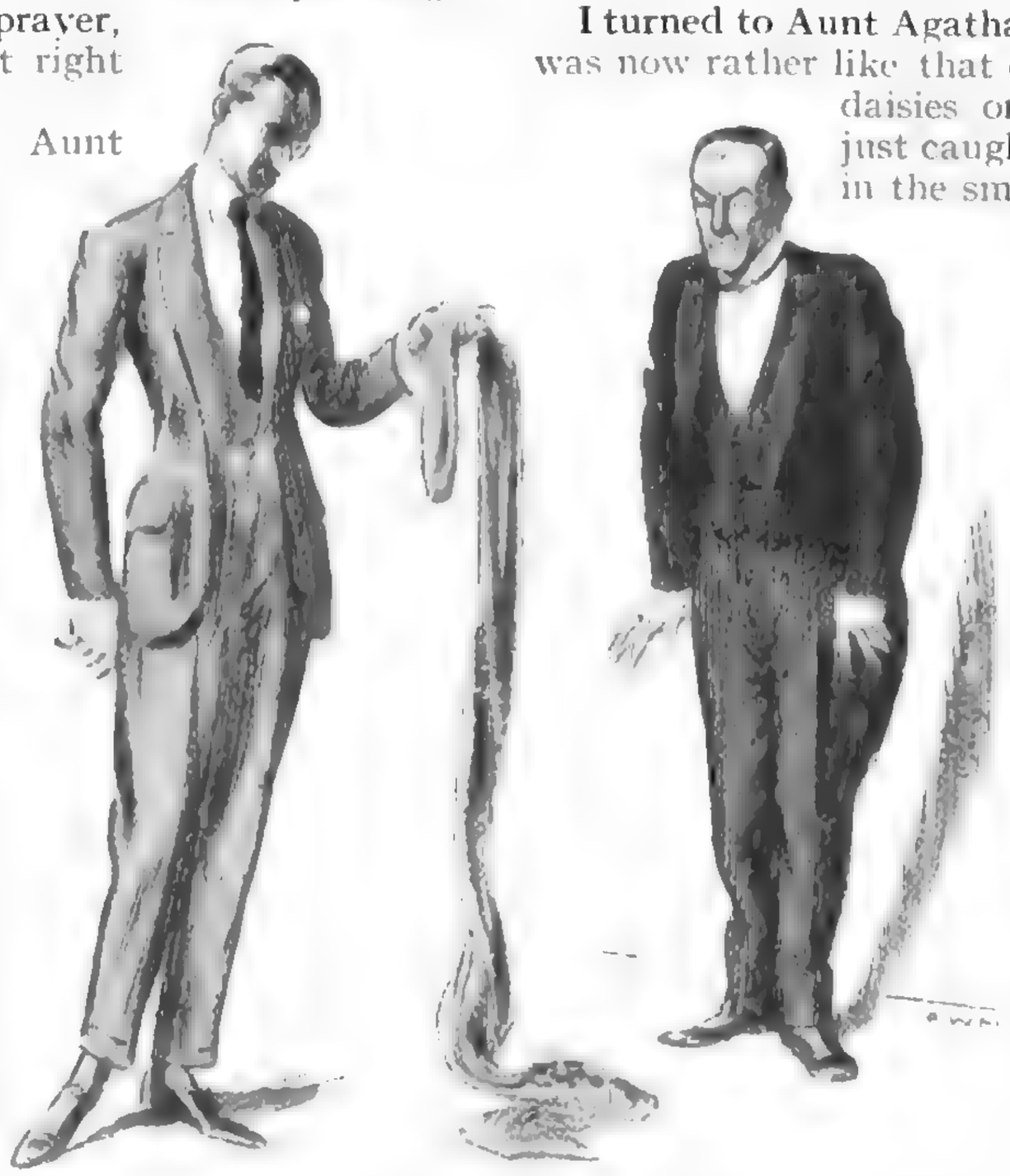
I don't know when I've had a more juicy moment. It was one of those occasions about which I shall prattle to my grandchildren—if I ever have any, which at the moment of going to press seems more or less of a hundred-to-one shot. Aunt Agatha simply deflated before my eyes. It reminded me of when I once saw some chappies letting the gas out of a balloon.

"Where—where—where——?" she gurgled.

'In this drawer. They'd slid under some paper."

Oh!" said Aunt Agatha, and there was a bit of a silence.

I dug out my entire stock of manly courage, breathed a short prayer, and let her have it right in the thorax.



It was a wrench, but I did it. I unstripped the cummerbund and handed it over.

"I must say, Aunt Agatha, dash it," I said, crisply, "I think you have been a little hasty, what? I mean to say, giving this poor man here so much anxiety and worry and generally biting him in the gizzard. You've been very, very unjust to this poor man!"

"Yes, yes," chipped in the poor man.

'And this unfortunate girl, what about her? Where does she get off? You've accused her of pinching the things on absolutely no evidence. I think she would be 'jolly well advised to bring an action for—for whatever it is, and soak you for substantial damages."

"*Mais oui, mais oui, c'est trop fort!*" shouted the Bandit Chief, backing me up like a good 'un. And the chambermaid looked up inquiringly, as if the sun was breaking through the clouds.

"I shall recompense her," said Aunt Agatha, feebly.

"If you take my tip, you jolly well will, and that eftsoones or right speedily. She's got a cast-iron case, and if I were her I wouldn't take a cent under twenty quid. But what gives me the pip most is the way you've abused this poor man here and tried to give his hotel a bad name——"

"Yes, by dam'! It's too bad!" cried the whiskered marvel. "You careless old woman! You give my hotel bad names, would you or wasn't it? To-morrow you leave my hotel."

And more to the same effect, all good, ripe stuff. And presently, having said his say, he withdrew, taking the chambermaid with him, the latter with a crisp tenner clutched in a vice-like grip. I suppose she and the bandit split it outside. A French hotel-manager wouldn't be likely to let real money wander away from him without counting himself in on the division.

I turned to Aunt Agatha, whose demeanour was now rather like that of one who, picking daisies on the railway, has just caught the down-express in the small of the back.

"There was something you wished to speak to me about?" I said.

"No, no. Go away, go away."

"You said in your note——"

"Yes, yes, never mind. Please go away, Bertie. I wish to be alone."

"Oh, right-ho!" I said. "Right-ho! right-ho!" And back to the good old suite.

"Ten o'clock, a clear night, and all's well, Jeeves," I said, breezing in.

'I am gratified to hear it, sir."

"If twenty quid would be any use to you, Jeeves——?"

"I am much obliged, sir."

There was a pause. And then—well, it was a wrench, but I did it. I unstripped the cummerbund and handed it over.

"Do you wish me to press this, sir?"

I gave the thing one last longing look. It had been very dear to me.

"No," I said, "take it away; give it to the deserving poor. I shall never wear it again."

'Thank you very much, sir," said Jeeves.

(*Next month: "Comrade Bingo."*)

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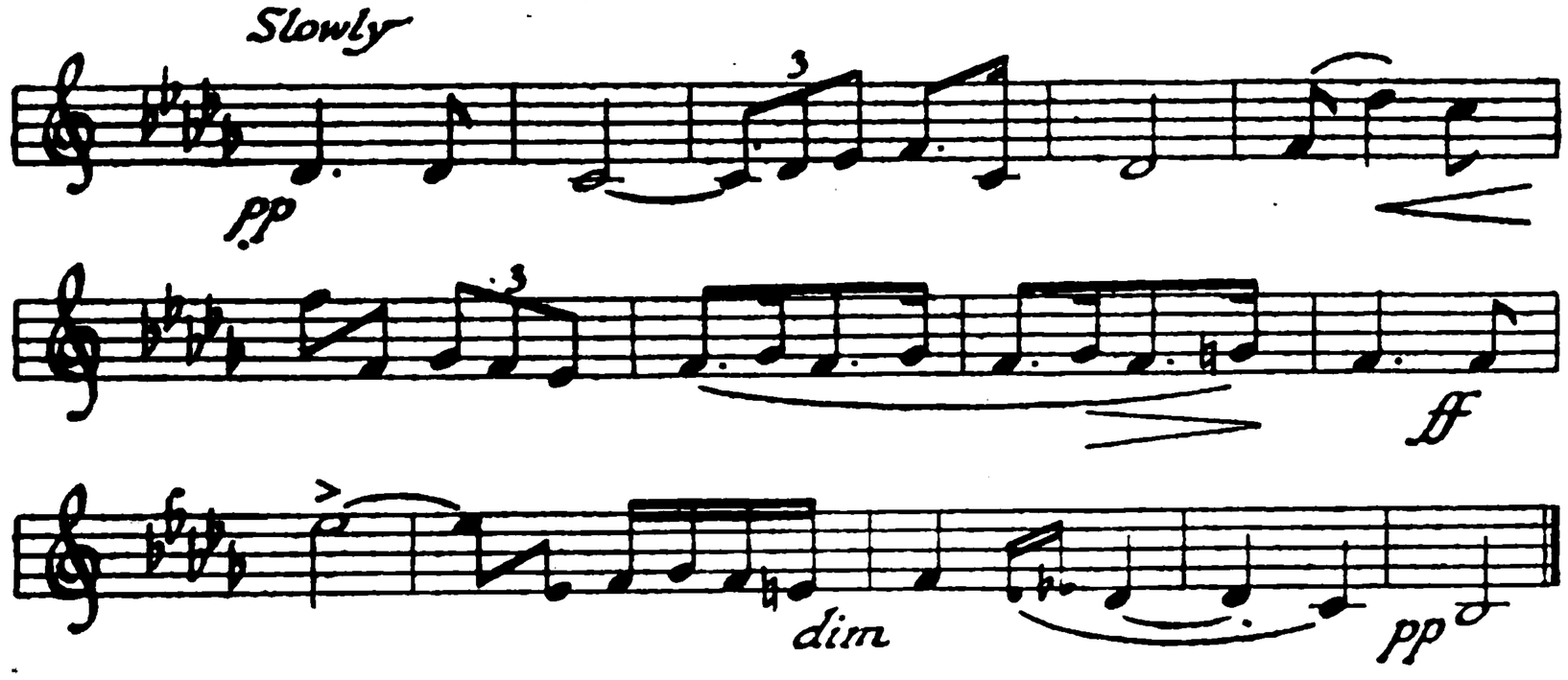
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AUGUSTA HOLMES, PIONEER

BY

DAME ETHEL SMYTH
Mus. Doc

I WELL remember the day when, as far as I was concerned, the thought of Augusta Holmes suddenly sprang into life. It was after luncheon in the smoking-room at Farnborough Hill, the Empress Eugénie's country house. In one of the ample maroon-leather arm-chairs, well filling every cubic inch of it, reclined a very great artist, the well-known amateur contralto of the Second Empire, Mme, Conneau, wife of the Emperor's physician. Lazy, absent-minded, beneficent, unregretfully conscious of having partaken of *gâteau-mille fleurs*—a Farnborough Hill speciality forbidden to the stout—there she lay; and while we others were talking and smoking, suddenly that wonderful voice of hers, in which dwelt the soul of all deep, soft instruments, breathed forth in an undertone the following melody :—



The wild, voluptuous line of the music carried words of like poignancy. Here is the first stanza :—

Elle m'a, de son clair regard,
Plus aigü que n'est une lame,
Percé, comme avec un poignard,
L'âme !

It was about a Spanish lover who hid himself at midnight beneath his mistress's balcony in order to catch in a bowl and mingle with drops of his own blood " les pleurs qu'elle jette au passé sombre "—therewith to brew the love-philtre which was to bring him peace, though whether by attainment of his desires or death, the song does not say. And words and music were by Augusta Holmes.

I had heard vaguely of this Irish girl, who in hatred of England and love for France had settled in Paris, and latinized her name with an *accent grave* into something that, as spoken by French mouths, sounded more or less like " Haul-maize "—or rather " 'Aul-maize." But her reputation was based mainly, so I was told, on songs and seduction. And as I myself had fallen almost immediately under the spell of the larger musical forms; as, too, in my youth I foolishly considered personal charm a weapon unworthy an artist, whereas nowadays I think, with the Empress's old *Dame d'Honneur* Mme. le Breton, that " cela ne gâte rien," I took no interest in Augusta Holmes.

That melody killed indifference. Mme. Conneau at once sent to Paris for other songs of hers, of which more presently, and also gave me various details of the composer's

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private life, of which, it appeared, that wild song might serve as condensed statement. Only unfortunately life lasts longer than fourteen bars of music and is harder to work into a harmonious whole. Full of my subject I of course wrote about it to my friend H. B., and learned that once upon a time in early youth, possessed by that terror of love which Henri de Régnier tells us is a more frequent trait in young men than their proceedings would lead one to suppose, he had fled before the spell of Augusta as wild animals flee from danger. He described to me a wonderful spring night; a band of comrades returning in various *sapins* from an expedition to Versailles; a full moon; cherry-trees in ghostly blossom on either side of the road; and, throned on the back-folded hood of the centre cab, *la Holmès*. From between her lips song and poetry flowed unceasingly —now an Ode of Horace, now an improvisation in the French she had tamed to her use as poets can; and among the worshippers grouped at her feet who for ever rekindled her dying cigarette was H. B. It was on the following day that, without telling his love, he fled by the first train.

No wonder she took the art world by storm, this girl who, electing to live the life of a Bohemian, was at the same time a poetess, a superb musician, a classical scholar, a patriot of the orthodox Irish type, and an all-round revolutionary whom the sight of a red Garibaldi melted to tears. Yet notwithstanding a singularly bold independent spirit she seems to have been emphatically a man's woman, and, as Mme. le Breton would say, it "spoilt nothing" that she was physically entrancing: a cameo-like profile very like Napoleon's, golden hair, dazzlingly fair skin, and beautiful grey eyes, though I think the head was too large. One gathered that the word "prudence" did not exist in her vocabulary, that she was generous and warm-hearted to excess, and whatever she did or did not accomplish the wing of genius had certainly brushed her cradle.

In an exquisite chapter of George Moore's "Memoirs of my Dead Life," called "Ninon's Table d'Hôte," she passes across the stage; and what a stage! the amazing garden of an old light-of-love, full of cats and ducks, macaws and cockatoos. The menagerie even included a badger and her brood; also a bear, before whom George Moore fled as H. B. was perhaps flying at that very moment before Augusta.

"On going towards the house," he writes, "I heard a well-known voice. 'This is Augusta Holmes,' I said, 'singing her opera. She sings all the different parts, soprano, contralto, tenor, and bass.' At that time we were all talking about her, and I stood by the window listening. What a beautiful evening it was! And how well do I remember the poet comparing the darkening sky to a blue veil with the moon like a gold beetle upon it. One of the women had brought a guitar with her, and again Augusta's voice streamed up through the stillness, till, compelled by the beauty of the singing, we drew nearer; as the composer sang her songs attitudes grew more abandoned and hands fell pensively. . . ."

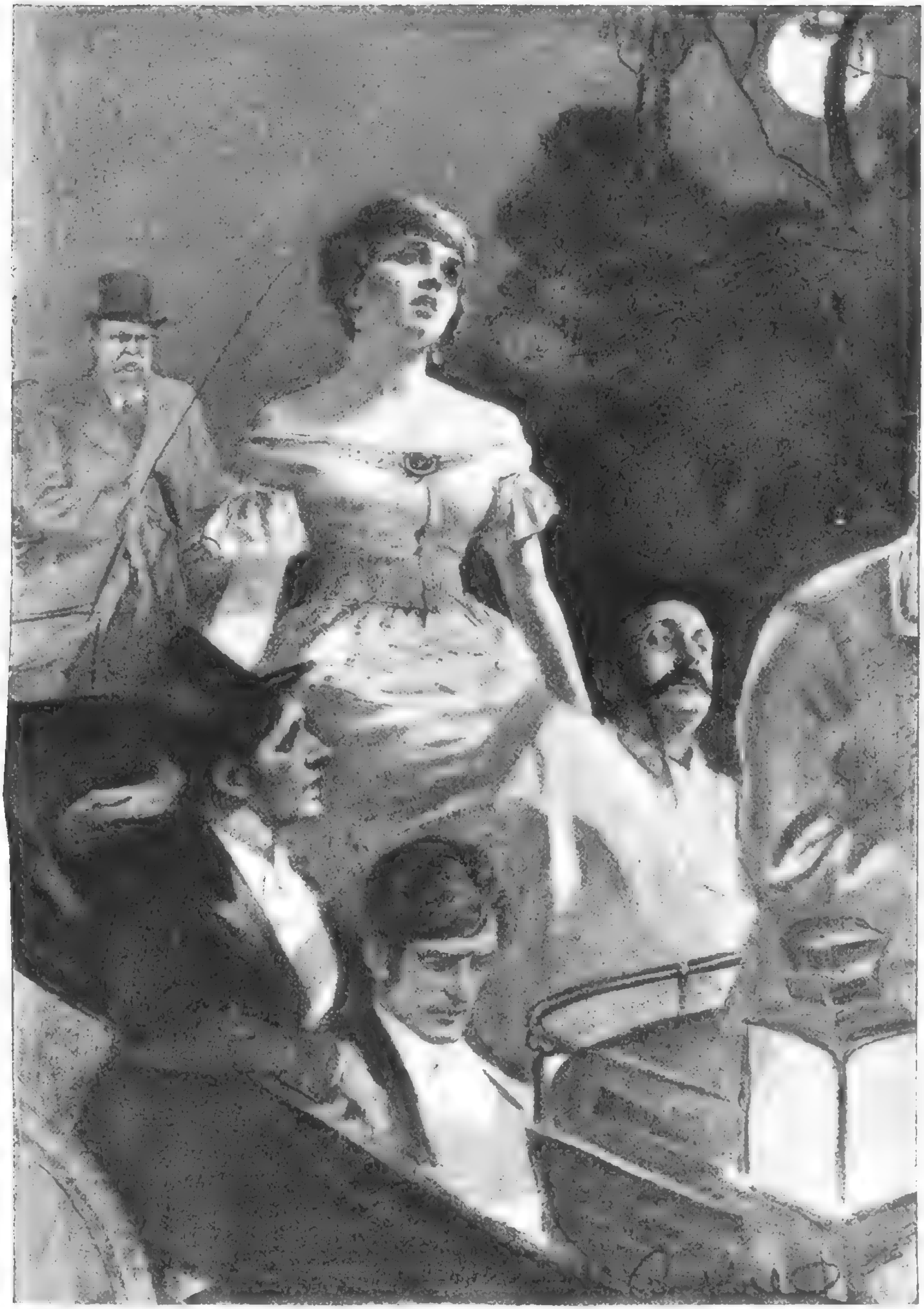
"WE were all in love with her," I once heard Saint-Saëns say—"literary men, *savants*, painters, musicians; any one of us would have been proud to make her his wife." But for marriage, as for most other well-sanctioned proceedings, Augusta Holmes had no inclination. To lead a life of violent emotion is to some natures a necessary condition of productivity. One remembers that the great mathematician, Sophie Kowalewski, declared she could not work out the inspired guess that won her the Bordin prize unless "le gros M.," who was the man of the hour, was seated at the table mending her pens. I fancy Augusta's temperament must have been on similar lines, but alas! the dominant love-venture of her life was unfortunate. Her purse had always been open to all, and when at length her once ample means were exhausted, I fear she found herself stranded in more ways than one. But to judge by George Moore's memoirs this was the usual fate of artistically-disposed women of that epoch—which accounts, I suppose, for the strange views held by my father and his contemporaries about "artists."

Luckily her gift of melody-writing survived the *débâcle* and the market did not weary of her songs. In those I know, the poems of which are nearly always her own, voluptuousness is the prevailing note. There is one song, a sort of hymn to Aphrodite, which, if suitably orchestrated and adequately rendered, might end by being forbidden by whatever Society sees to these things. It is as languorous, as enervating as the celebrated Barcarolle in "Hoffmann's Tales," which I remember Gustav Mahler, as a young man, declared was as immortal as the "Tristan" he had just been conducting!

But Augusta Holmes has other notes. Some of her songs have a dewy freshness that suggests a French Schubert—for instance, the well-known child's song, "Noël," and the exquisite little ballad with the refrain, "M'aimes-tu . . . ne m'aimes-tu pas," set to a simple horn-call which is the recaptured echo of something that happened long ago, that happens to-day, that will go on happening for ever.

There is one fierce song of hers, "Chansons

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A wonderful spring night; a band of comrades returning from an expedition to Versailles; and, throned on the back-folded hood of the centre cab, *la Holmès*.

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des Gars d'Irlande," which would go round the world but for the fact that there is no demand for a Home Rule song in French. This hymn of vengeance, with a touch of cheapness in its enthusiasm and of hysterical cruelty in its fierceness, has nothing of the divine wrath of a great nation that forged the "Marseillaise"; but the reckless energy of the closely-knitted rhythm, the sledge-hammer whacking-out of the melody by the right thumb, the really terrifying go of the tune, make it unique in song literature. Mme. Conneau said that, listening to Augusta singing it, whole rooms-full of law-abiding citizens would see red. And when, trusting to the knowledge of foreign tongues that obtains in England, I used to sing it at Primrose League meetings under the title of "Orange Song," the effect was electrifying.

I may further add, if it be not too egotistic, that when John Sargent was doing a "black-and-white" portrait of me—which honour I owe to the request of a sister—the suggestion to "sing something exciting" was met first by Schubert's "Gruppe aus Tartarus" and then by this song of Holmes. And I think the artist will bear me out in saying he was adequately startled.

Of Augusta Holmes's suites for orchestra, symphonic poems, and chamber music I am ignorant to this day, though Sir Henry Wood tells me that he once produced a Symphonic Poem of hers called "Irlande" which was very fine and admirably orchestrated. Of her opera I only heard a part; but knowing what I do about the difficulties of the operatic career, especially *plus* the handicap of sex, the astonishing fact about it was that it existed at all. Fifteen years elapsed between the acceptance of "La Montagne Noire" at the Paris Opera and its production—fifteen years of heart-sickening hope deferred—and it must have been some time in the 'nineties that, passing through France in a hurry, I contrived to hear three of the four acts.

I thought the libretto bad, though they said she would not allow this (no composer-librettist ever does); the machinery of the plot struck me as conventional and much of the music was student's work. But child though she must have been when most of it was written, she invariably rose to the big situations, and given her strong dramatic instinct and the pages upon pages of warm, beautiful, melodious music in it, a second opera from her pen might have been a masterpiece.

But it was never to be written. Herein lay the pathos of her fate, that by the time she saw her work played it was too late to profit by the experience. Worn out by the struggle for life and the nervous strain to which all pioneers are exposed—a strain of which followers of an ever so slightly-beaten track can form no conception—Augusta Holmes had laid down her arms. Such at least was my impression when, in the year 1899 or thereabouts, impelled by a great desire to see and thank one to whom all women owe a great debt, I wrote to ask permission to visit her.

SHE lived at the top of a very high house overlooking the country and was not by way of receiving just then, having barely recovered from a severe illness, but to a fellow-composer anxious to do her honour she would not deny her door. I was shown into an empty music-room of a type I know too well and consider one of the most depressing spectacles life can afford, the gala room of a *ci-devant!* The walls were smothered in tarnished trophies of all kinds, including laurel wreaths of gigantic size and incredible age tied up with faded ribbons from which dangled fly-blown visiting cards. There were photographs framed and bescrawled with passionate protestations; there were locks of hair flattened out behind glass and similarly dedicated; there was a satin shoe, and, strangest of all, on a nail hung a flute adorned with dusty little woollen balls like Christmas-tree pen-wipers. Evidently, I said to myself, as the Jacobites would drink to "The King Over the Water," and fling their glasses over their shoulders, so some enamoured flautist, after playing one of her *obbligati*, must have hung his flute there, resolved that never again should it utter music. But this did not solve the mystery of the woollen pen-wipers.

The whole side of another wall was taken up by a startling life-size portrait, evidently the work of a demented admirer of Rembrandt, in which *la Holmès* was depicted darting across a pitch-dark room and transfixing with one slender finger a brilliantly illumined note, the rest of the keyboard being in gloom. One felt instinctively that this work had given great satisfaction to the two people chiefly concerned, and I was recovering from the shock of it when the folding doors opened and the original entered the room.

She was attired with delightful absence of vanity in a red flannel dressing-gown of the type worn by my sisters and myself in our schoolroom days; and though the hair and complexion were evidently carrying on a tradition, there was not much trace of the physical charm of her youth. But the manner was exceedingly winning—frank, cordial, and free from either affectation or the bitterness of one whose sun has set. And there was a touch of gallantry, too, about the whole personality that in after years I recognized as the legacy of yet

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another tradition, that of Villiers de Lisle Adam and Barbey d'Aurevilly.

In my letter I had based my claim to intrude on the fact that I was a fellow-struggler in the thicket of opera, and, to be frank, I fancied that some rumours of a recent event at Weimar—the production of my first opera, "Fantasio"—must surely have reached her ears. I now realized with a mixed feeling of mortification and amusement that she had not the faintest idea who I was or what I had achieved; enough for her that I was a music-loving stranger who admired and wished to know her.



Augusta Holmes.

One impression remains vividly. It had always distressed me to think of the terrible price she had paid for one or two of her passional ventures; but when by chance the talk drifted for a moment into intimate regions, the serene detached key in which she pitched a casual reference to past storms was wonderfully reassuring. Telemachus, visitor at the Court of Menelaus, must have been similarly relieved when, in the course of a pleasant chat with her priggish young friend, Helen commented in exactly the same dispassionate tone on the events that led to the Trojan War, casting the blame on Aphrodite, who, she remarked, had misled her into abandoning her country, her child, and a dear husband who was neither stupid nor ugly.* So deeply imbued with the classical spirit was Augusta that I am sure no other view of her own case would have occurred to her; and indeed it is the only plausible way of accounting for certain phenomena: "C'est Vénus toute entière à sa proie attachée." . . .

A year or two later I again saw Augusta Holmes. It had long been a cherished project of mine to get up a Holmes concert in London—anything to bring a ray of sunshine into the rather grey autumn of her life. "Der Wald," my second opera, which had been produced in Berlin, was about to be performed in London, and I ignorantly fancied that this event might give me some leverage. So I wrote to say I would come and discuss the matter with her, bringing with me one whom she certainly would not remember, but who had worshipped her in his youth and would like to see her again.

That meeting is one of the supremely comic recollections of my life. In 1902 H. B. was still a very good-looking man, and the sight of him had the effect on Augusta of the classical bugle-call on the demobilized war-horse. Now for the first time I was able to reconstruct in flashes the beauty and fascination that had conquered Paris some decades ago; and well for me that at least this pastime was open to me, for to push the real object of my visit, even to mention it, proved an impossibility. The drive from Versailles having been alluded to, similar recollections followed fast and faster; her eyes full of the light of the past, my hostess had not a glance to spare for possible triumphs in the future. Unable to place a word, chagrined, provoked, yet conscious that nothing could be more perfectly in character, and therefore on the whole well pleased, I at last got up and left the friends to their reminiscences, privately determining to return to the charge later on unaccompanied by any member of the male sex.

Then came "Der Wald" in London. A fortnight later I was on the deck of a liner bound for New York, and as Ireland faded away in mist I took up my evening paper, snatched from one of those bundles that are invariably hurled on board as a vessel leaves

* Odyssey, Book IV.

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the quay, and which the passengers are unable to resist though they have been studying the same papers all the way down to the port.

But I had not; and it was with a shock that I read the head-line :—

"DEATH OF AUGUSTA HOLMES."

BEFORE trying to answer the inevitable question, "Did she write anything that will live?" I should like to offer a Short Reflection on the Subject of Immortality.

Consider how many anonymous poems have taken root in our anthologies, what a vast number of pictures by "that great artist Ignoto," who someone said was his favourite painter, have survived. On the other hand, of how many writers who dominated their generation are the very names forgotten!

There is no more curious reading than Schumann's "Music and Musicians," full of enthusiastic tributes to composers no one has ever heard of; and to add to our confusion, though the dawning of Brahms is heralded, Wagner is hardly mentioned. But perhaps the best illustration of the freakishness of fame is Guibert, who was taken by his generation and by Voltaire himself for Voltaire's equal, and to-day is only remembered, if at all, because Julie de Lespinasse died of love for him! Or think of Bach, merely one among many in his day, who was considered "old-fashioned" towards the close of his life by musical geniuses who now are with last winter's snow! . . . But it is useless to multiply proofs of the contention that notoriety during an artist's lifetime seems to determine nothing; contemporaries may be right and they may be wrong.

I go back to my starting-point, the works of Ignoto, and thereon base my belief that a perfect thing, however isolated, however small, is sure to live, because one fastidious and careful hand will pass it on to another till it is safe for all time. What matters is not the bulk of an artist's output, not the size of a work of art, but its quality. If one note in the divine harmony has been sounded to perfection the faithful servant who struck it will enter into the joy of his Lord.

I believe that some of Augusta Holmes's compositions will survive on these lines: jewels wrought by one who evidently was not among the giants but for all that knew how to cut a gem. Even now, at that worst hour for an artist, the cold, dangerous hour that follows sunset, though many readers of these pages may not even have heard her name, I expect her immortality has begun, that here and there she is being sung. And it pleases me to think that at this very moment, while I am invoking her memory, the earthly echoes of some of her music may be "going by her like thin flames."

NEXT MONTH

we shall commence a new series of articles—

"How to Make the Best of Life,"

by

ARNOLD BENNETT,

the title of the first being

"TEMPERAMENT AND HABITS."

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THE KEG

by

J.J. BELL

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK GILLETT R.I.

AT 4.30, or thereabouts, the sun rose from the sea; a few minutes later Donald McKelvie rose from the heather.

The sun was bright, the breeze fresh; Donald was neither. Blinking, yawning, stretching his long, middle-aged frame, he remembered, slowly, that a wedding had been celebrated at Ardhasaig the previous evening, and, abruptly, that he had been there. Ardhasaig was seven miles from the hut he called home, and he now perceived that he was within a mile of the hut.

Pondering drowsily, he shook his head. He recollected nothing of the journey in the dark hours, nothing of that zigzag course which must have made nine miles of the six, nothing of the final fall by the wayside.

"My good life!" he murmured, "but it must have been a brave wedding! Tamn the whisky!—though the Lord kens I could take a dram now."

He lurched to the road, pulled himself together, and marched. Presently, on h knees beside a well frequented by shaggy, big-horned cattle, he drank deep. You would have expected him to lave at least his burning brow, but, as a matter of fact, Donald left all face-washing to Nature; and, truly, rain and spindrift were no strangers to his good-humoured, if rather sly, countenance.

Once more he straightened up, stretching himself, already revived. His sense of physical discomfort—at its worst far from acute—was passing. To Donald the vulgar headache of less crude indulgence in more civilized atmospheres was unknown. A certain lassitude of body and fogginess of brain were his whole punishment.

He pulled down his jersey and surveyed the scene familiar for forty years—the mountains, the torrents, the loch, the open sea, the scattered isles—the greys and greens, the browns and blues, the silver and gold—with unemotional satisfaction. Thank God, it was going to be another fine day, and there was no work that could not be put off till the morrow.

Appetite stirred; he turned towards home—then stopped short, staring down at the shore. Well, well! yon was a queer place to beach a boat, and a queerer place to leave it! And the boat itself was queer! Donald glanced about him, as was his wont before performing the smallest outdoor act, and stepped from the road.

On the verge of the stony beach his going became wary. It was indeed a queer boat, and suddenly Donald had remembered another queer boat, found on the shore long ago, which had contained a dreadful cargo. So he went forward slowly, sweating a little and sniffing furtively.

But, after all, the boat held nothing sinister, though possibly it might have suggested tragedy to a fisherman like Donald. It was small and old and in ill repair; might have belonged to a tramp steamer, but any name had long since been obliterated. It contained nothing but an oar with broken blade, a rusted corned beef can, several inches of foul water, and a keg lashed to the forward thwart. A yard of an ancient painter hung from the bow.

"Well, well!" muttered Donald, after a sigh of relief. "If there was ever anybody in her, they have been picked up or gone overboard—which is better than dying of hunger and thirst."

He glanced about him, leaned over and rapped the keg with his knuckles. There was nothing hollow about the response.

"Well, well!" he murmured again, reflectively.

The keg, also, was queer, inasmuch as Donald had never seen one exactly similar. It was an exceedingly stoutly-built keg and very nicely finished, freshly painted dark green, with smart black iron hoops. Eyeing it, Donald strolled round to the other side of

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the boat and made the—to him—astounding discovery that the keg had no bung-hole; nor was there any visible indication of a spigot-hole.

"Maybe it will be standing on it," he thought. "Maybe there will be a labble (label) on the bottom."

Having taken a careful survey of the road, he undid the lashings, and made to turn the keg over.

"My good life, but it is heavy!"

His hand slipped; the keg fell sideways with a sousing splash. A square of paper pulp moved in the swirl, but disintegrated at his clutch.

"Now I cannot tell who will be the owner," he said, yet not sorrowfully. He thought of the coastguard—or, rather, the thought forced itself upon him. "Ay, ay; it is no doubt a job for the coastguard; but the coastguard is nine miles from here—and what if a dishonest person should come along while I am running to the coastguard? No, no; I cannot be having so much responsibilities as all that. I will take this keg to my house, and next week, or maybe the week after, I will send an advertisement to the *Oban Times*—'Found a keg; ten pounds reward,' and so on; and I will put a number instead of my name. Ay, that is what I will do."

So saying, he laid hold of the keg. It was all he could do to get it over the gunwale. He regarded it resting on the stones with a stupefied expression. What could be in it? Certainly not potable fluid. And who would pack butter or herring, or any such things, in so beautiful a keg? Besides, it was too heavy. He rapped it again. Why, the thing rang solid! A little longer he stared, thinking hard, and then sweat broke on his face and the ruddy bronze took on a sickly shade. Donald had not been so pale since the day, twenty years ago, when he fell over the cliff and broke his leg.

"My good life!" he whispered, hoarsely, "what if it was gold—German, maybe Roossian, gold!" He was aware that there was no gold in his own country. In a vague vision he saw a foreign-looking scoundrel fleeing to sea with the purloined treasure, encountering a gale, and going overboard.

With no small toil he got the keg to the road, and started to roll it before him. Had it been possible, he would have set the boat adrift; but the tide was at its lowest, and she was high ashore.

LIKE most West Highland roads, this one had few stretches that could be termed level; and it wound like a corkscrew. Bent almost double, with eyes up-cast in an agony of furtiveness, he propelled, or restrained, his treasure. And then—a curse on all early rising!—round a bend came Peter Morrison, bound for his flounder nets, a short, stout, elderly man of exceedingly bland countenance.

Peter stopped and, addressing the keg, remarked that it was a fine morning.

Donald, wishing his neighbour dead, stopped also, assented as cheerfully as he could, and got ready his falsehood.

"Well, well; and what have you there, Donald?" came the inevitable inquiry.

Donald produced a grin. "I do not ken yet," he replied. "It is a present from my uncle in Oban. He is a very humorous man, my uncle. 'My dear Donald,' he said in his letter, 'I am sending you a keg of what do you think?' And to tease me," Donald ran on, in time to prevent the anticipated question, "he consigned the keg to Ardhasaig so that I would have seven miles to go to fetch it. But, you see, I was at the wedding at Ardhasaig last night, so it suited me very well."

"Are you just getting home from the wedding now?" said Peter.

"Ay; I had to wait till the piermaster was sober enough to find his key for the store. He was at the wedding, too. But I am wondering what is inside my keg. What would you guess, Peter? Whisky, or beer, or stout?—or it might be port wine?—for my uncle is a wealthy man."

"If it is beer or stout," said Peter, licking his lips, "it is a wonder you have not bursted the keg with rolling it on such a road. Can you not take it on your shoulder?"

"My shoulder is tired with it."

"Then sit you down till I get back from the nets, and I will give you my help, Donald, with all the pleasure in life."

"You are a good friend, Peter, but I must be able to tell my uncle that I fetched it all by myself. He is very easy offended, my uncle."

"Then I will just give you a little call at your house on my way back, and see how you have got on. My father-in-law, as you may have heard, was a respectable innkeeper, so I ken all about bottling, and so forth."

"Thank you, thank you, Peter! But I am a poor weak man, and about thirty, or twenty, minutes ago I made a vow that I would not take a drop from the keg till my day's work would be over."

"You are a man of good sense and great virtue, Donald, and I respect you," said Peter, cordially, "therefore I will not give you my little call till the evening. Now I must be getting along to the nets."

With a sweet smile he passed on.

Donald swallowed a curse and called after him:—

"Remember, it is private, Peter."

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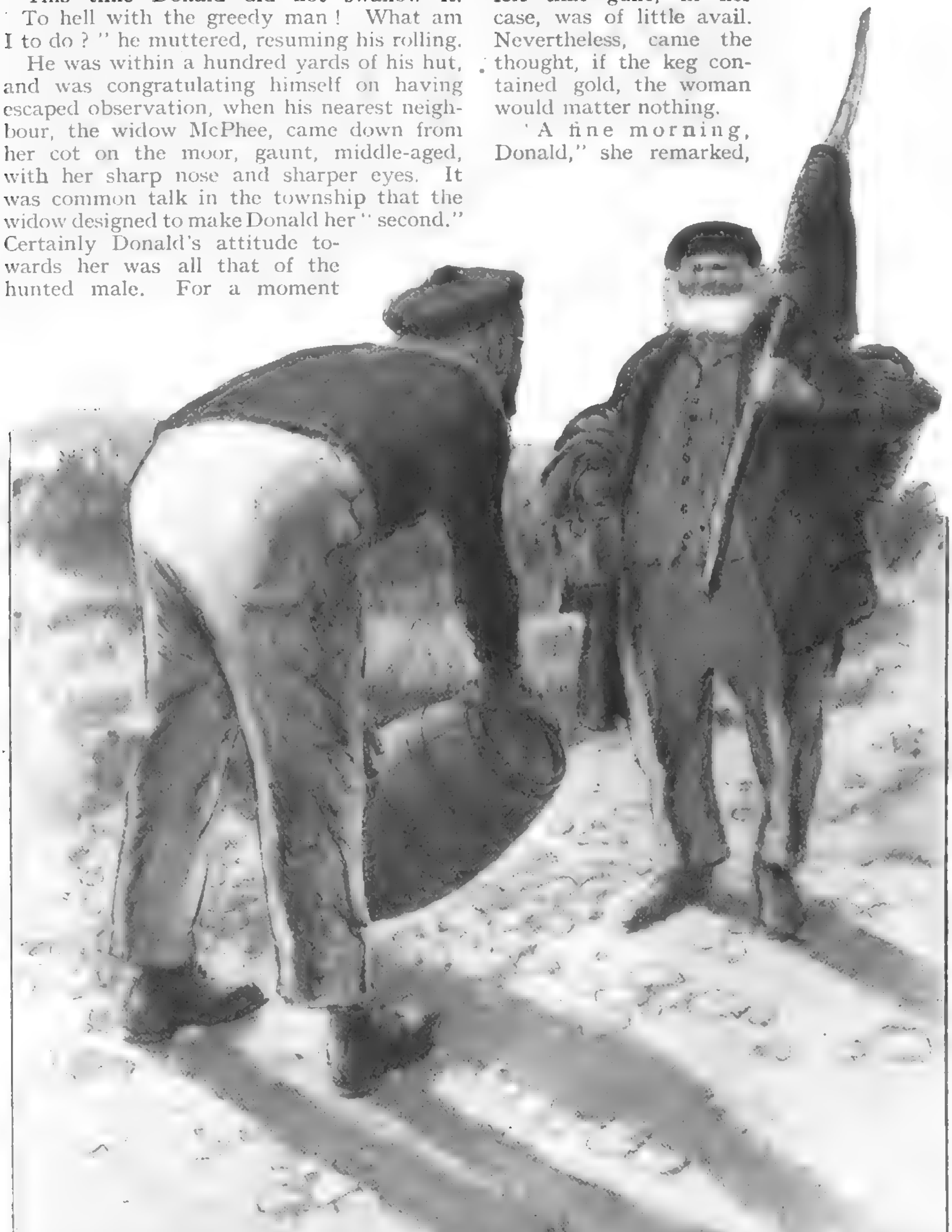
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"Be not afraid, Donald," came the response. "I will remember that the keg is strictly between you and me."

This time Donald did not swallow it. "To hell with the greedy man! What am I to do?" he muttered, resuming his rolling.

He was within a hundred yards of his hut, and was congratulating himself on having escaped observation, when his nearest neighbour, the widow McPhee, came down from her cot on the moor, gaunt, middle-aged, with her sharp nose and sharper eyes. It was common talk in the township that the widow designed to make Donald her "second." Certainly Donald's attitude towards her was all that of the hunted male. For a moment now he felt like letting the keg roll down the path up which he had laboriously pushed it, over the cliff and into the loch. For he felt that guile, in her case, was of little avail. Nevertheless, came the thought, if the keg contained gold, the woman would matter nothing.

"A fine morning, Donald," she remarked,



"I am wondering what is inside my keg. What would you guess, Peter? Whisky, or beer, or stout?"

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amiably. "And whose nice keg might you be rolling so early?"

"It is my own," answered Donald, raising his aching back, and proceeded to repeat the uncle story.

She listened attentively till he ended, then she said:—

"I did not ken you had a wealthy uncle in Oban, Donald. What is his name?"

"The same as my own. He has not been in Oban for very long; maybe three years, or two; and he is going away again very soon; and he has been wealthy only for a short time."

"I see," said the widow McPhee, slowly. "Well, he must be a very kind-hearted man, but of great extravagance; and I am thinking it is a pity for him to be sending you so much intoxicating liquid, whatever it is, when you could have done well with the money instead. Besides, it is too much intoxicating liquid to be in the house of a single man."

"I am very careful with the drink," said Donald, wondering what she had meant exactly by the words "single man."

The widow McPhee ignored the remark. "It is a strange-looking keg," she observed, gazing as though she would penetrate its staves.

"I dare say they have kegs in Ger—in the south different from the kegs in——"

"It is the strangest-looking keg I ever saw in my life, and I have often seen kegs on the steamer, and wondered what was in them. Why do you roll the keg, Donald?"

"Oh, just for a change! And now"—with a supreme effort to break away—"I will be rolling it up to my house and getting my breakfast."

"I hope you will not be for taking your breakfast from the keg," she said, solemnly.

"Oh, I do not think I will open the keg for a very long time; indeed, I think I will be keeping it for the New Year—unless it is beer or stout, which would be a sin against Providence. And so, a good morning to you, Mistress McPhee."

She let him go. "The best thing I can do," she reflected, "is to tell many of his friends, so that he will not be drinking it all to himself in secret."

"Now she will blow it out to everybody, and I will be getting no peace," Donald wailed to himself. "And what did she mean by saying it was a strange-looking keg? Why, heavens! I had best not open it when she, or anybody in the place, is awake."

HE put in a long and rather feverish day, only leaving the hut at noon to purchase, grudgingly, a bottle of whisky.

Peter arrived at five o'clock, bringing a gift of flounders.

"But it is a pity you have told so many," he remarked. "You will be having visitors to-night."

"That woman saw me with the keg," Donald explained.

Peter made a gesture of sympathetic comprehension. "Well, now, I will help you to open it."

"It is opened—and sealed up again. But I drew a good jugful, and I am going to give you a good dram, Peter."

"What is it?" inquired Peter, eagerly.

"I would say it was whisky."

"Eh? Are you not sure?"

"Oh, yes; it is whisky—but different. Maybe you will like it. I have not got the taste for it yet. But here it is." And Donald poured from the jug a stiff glass.

Peter took it. "Is it Irish?"

"I could not say. Try it."

Peter sniffed; hesitated; took a mouthful.

"My grief!" he exclaimed; "it is whisky, but I do not like it at all, at all! It has a taste of fish and paraffin and medicine—thank you all the same. And now I will be getting home."

"I am sorry, Peter. I will write to my uncle about it."

In such wise did Donald rid himself of those interested in the contents of his keg.

Meanwhile the keg itself had still to be opened.

Night came at last. About eleven o'clock Donald rose from his bunk whereon he had been lying for several hours, indulging in golden dreams. He could not longer doubt that the keg contained riches. He did not often get a bright idea into his head, but when one got there it was apt to stick. "If it is not money," he declared to himself, "it is something of great price, and I am the lucky man!"

He was still uneasy regarding the widow McPhee. Several times he had imagined he heard a prowling step. Cautiously he opened his door and peered out. Ha! what good fortune!—there was no light in the cot across the burn—the widow had gone to her bed! He need delay no longer.

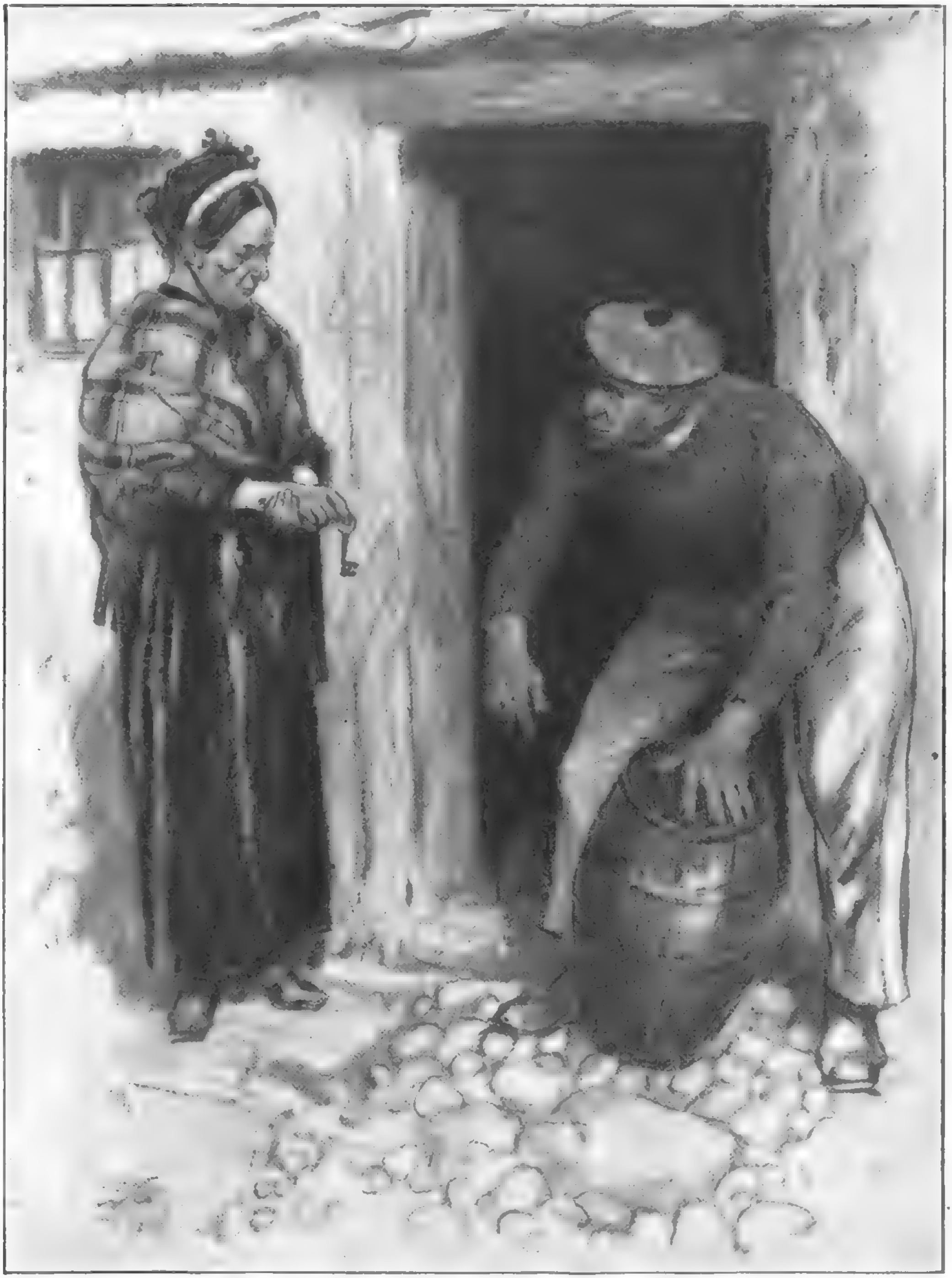
He lit the lamp; his few odd tools were ready to hand. From under the bunk he rolled the keg and stood it on end.

"My good life, but it is heavy!" he cried, gleefully this time.

It was a troublesome job, however, and he was no artist with tools. At last, fired with impatience, he seized his old hatchet and smote the top. The stout wood split; he prised out part of it and plunged in his hand.

Sawdust — but under the sawdust something hard and smooth and cold. Torn

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"Now take a good look at the keg," Donald almost shouted, "because you will never **see it again!"**

betwixt hope and fear he wrought frantically, scattering wood and sawdust.

And as he laid bare the prize, a groan burst from him — and in the same instant a knock fell distinctly on the door. For a moment he was dumbfounded. Then, snatching the blanket from the bunk, he threw it over the keg and paused in thought.

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The knock fell again, urgently. Pulling himself together, he went to the door.

In the lingering summer twilight stood the widow McPhee.

"Donald McKelvie," she said, "I wish for to see yon keg."

Before that penetrating eye any attempt at prevarication was foredoomed to fail.

His voice thick with exasperation, Donald replied :—

"Then, by the Lord, you'll see it! Bide where you are."

He retired indoors and in a few seconds reappeared, rolling the keg before him He brought it to rest on the narrow patch of level ground in front of his door.

"Now take a good look at it," he almost shouted, "because you will never see it again!"

Saying which, he pushed it over the brow of the steep moorland slope.

"What—what——!" gasped the widow, aghast. "Stop it!"

But the keg was already well on its last journey, bounding from heathery tussocks, cannoning off boulders. From the high bank it cleared the road and careered wildly towards the cliff. Just at the verge some natural protuberance gave it an uplift, and it soared—then down, down out of sight. Came to the listening ears a dull sound, followed by a plash or two as of fragments.

"Bursted on the De'il's Rock!" cried the widow. "Oh, Donald, what was inside it?"

"A tamned statute!" answered Donald, and went in, slamming the door.

The widow wheeled about and knocked briskly. With the look of a cut-throat, Donald opened again.

'You are a great fool, Donald McKelvie," she said. "I came to warn you, and now you have ruined yourself."

"Warn me!" he whispered, in sudden alarm.

'I came just now from the village. I was seeing old Mrs. McTavish. The *Bee* came in, and the skipper is in an awful state of mind. Last night he lost his small boat; it was being towed, and broke adrift in the dark when no one was watching."

The *Bee* was the little sixty-ton cargo steamer that plied among the islands.

"Now," she went on, while Donald drooped, "he has found his boat, but not the thing that was in the boat—a green keg. The keg was in the boat because the mate had been too lazy to put it on board the steamer; and it was going from Sir Archibald Brown, of Mingay, to his lordship here."

Donald shuddered and sank against the doorpost. The Laird's property!

"Now," said the widow, after a painful silence, "it is a great pity you told so many people about your uncle's whisky, and it is a greater pity that you gave them bad whisky, for they will remember that long after you are dead. Still, nobody has seen the keg but Peter Morrison and myself; and I have spoken to Peter Morrison, and he will tell the policeman nothing—unless I let him."

"But you would not do that, Mistress McPhee!" said Donald, feebly—so feebly that, perhaps, she did not hear.

"I know things about Peter," she went on, "and he would sooner cross a holy angel than me. But for myself—well, you see, Donald, I am your nearest neighbour, and I am a truthful woman. I was seen talking to you early this morning. The policeman will come to me as sure as the sun rises. Maybe he will take us both to the court. Then I will have to kiss the Book and tell the truth."

"But—my good life!—old friends like us!—would you bear witness against me?"

"I do not wish for to see you go to jail, Donald, maybe for years and years; but what can I do if the judge says: 'Woman, will you take'—I mean—'did you see this man with a green keg?' I cannot ruin my mortal soul, even for you, Donald."

"But such an old friend—could you not refuse to bear witness?"

'Only a wife," said the widow McPhee, softly, "does not need to bear witness against her husband."

Donald sat down on his doorstep and wept silent tears of despair. When, at last, he arose he had decided against going to jail.

IN the same hour his lordship indited a letter to his friend and co-director in several limited companies, Sir Archibald Brown :—

"My dear Sir Archibald,—It is extremely kind of you to send me a bust of Julius Cæsar in the new metal invented and patented by your talented son. I assure you that I shall prize it not only as the effigy of an individual for whom I have always felt a considerable regard, but also as a pleasing reminder of our friendship.

"Sincerely yours,
(Signature illegible.)

"P.S.—A green keg was not among the goods landed from the *Bee* this afternoon, but possibly it will arrive by her next trip."

Possibly!

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John Barrymore as the youthful Sherlock Holmes.

THE YOUTH OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

By HAYDEN CHURCH.

In the following striking interview Sherlock Holmes's latest impersonator —Mr. John Barrymore, the famous American actor—announces his intention of introducing us to the detective at the opening of his career, and portraying his development as the master sleuth.

ACTORS of Sherlock Holmes, alike on the stage and the screen, increase and multiply as time goes on. The first to impersonate Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous sleuth was, of course, the distinguished American actor-dramatist, William Gillette, whose exciting play, after a triumphant career in the United States, was given at the Lyceum Theatre, and was performed to packed audiences for close on a year. A detail of that production now interesting to recall is the fact that the part of the page-boy, Billy, was taken by Charlie Chaplin, who thus, at the age of fourteen, made his first appearance in the "legitimate."

Later on the name-part in "Sherlock Holmes" was assumed in England by Mr. H. A. Saintsbury, one of our most capable romantic actors, who appeared in the Gillette drama some thousands of times. Mr. Saintsbury also enacted Holmes in the dramatic version that was made later by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle himself of one of the most thrilling of all his detective adventures, "The Speckled Band," and has again been seen therein in the recent revival of the play.

Another Sherlock of the stage has been Mr. Dennis Neilson-Terry, who, at the Coliseum and elsewhere, has been seen as the detective in "The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone." Almost simultaneously we have had a Sherlock Holmes of the screen in the person of Mr. Eille Norwood, who, in "movie" versions of some of the most renowned of the Adventures, has revealed a genius for disguise and make-up worthy to rank with that possessed by Holmes himself.

And now forward comes Mr. John Barrymore, the famous American actor, with intent to give us another, and, one may say at once, a somewhat startling conception of Sherlock Holmes in a new and strikingly

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Sherlock Holmes on the alert—a scene on the Thames Embankment, with the Houses of Parliament in the background.

original film version of the Gillette play which is now being written for him in the States.

What renders Barrymore's forthcoming appearance in the *rôle* of Sherlock Holmes specially interesting, however, is the striking originality with which, at the actor's behest, the authors of this new version of William Gillette's play have "handled" the principal character. In a specially-written prologue they have projected Sherlock Holmes back into the days of his youth, days of which the detective's creator has told us next to nothing, with a view, as Barrymore explained to me, of tracing Holmes's "development" into the Master Investigator.

We are thus to see Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's detective as a young student of a dreamy, indeterminate, half-poetic type, as yet undecided as to what his vocation in life will be. We are to see him embittered by an early and unfortunate love affair. And finally (so far as this surprising prologue is concerned), we are to see him, still immature, brought into sudden contact with Professor Moriarty, the Napoleon of Crime of "The Final Problem," and from that moment resolved upon his mission in life—nothing more or less than to rid the world of the Professor and the vast criminal organization of which he was the master brain.

It was in a bedroom of the Ritz that I discovered Mr. Barrymore, who, arrayed in flowered silk pyjamas, was at that very moment engaged in making-up as the great Sherlock. This process, in his case, consisted, and needed to consist, of little more than a judicious lengthening of the eyebrows, plus application of the pigment which provides the correct film complexion and gives all cinema actors the appearance of suffering from jaundice.

For Barrymore, with his long, narrow, aquiline face, deep-sunk, magnetic, penetrating eyes, and somewhat brooding expression, is already Holmes in the flesh so far as countenance is concerned. He has the lithe, loose-limbed figure that one associates with the great detective, too. All that he needs to be an ideal Sherlock is a few more inches, but the illusion of commanding height will be obtained, his producer later assured me, by having players of inconsiderable stature in the subsidiary parts.

"My producer and I are in England," said Barrymore, "for the purpose of getting the correct settings and the real atmosphere for certain exterior scenes in our film version of 'Sherlock Holmes,' which will connect up the original ones of the Gillette play, the entire action of which passed, you will remember, indoors. The other scenes will be built in New York, where the remainder of the film will be produced. I flew over here from the Continent, where I've been climbing Mont Blanc and doing a few other little holiday stunts, and since then we've been 'shooting' here. One of our best scenes was done at St. John's College, Cambridge, and others in Stepney, on Lambeth Pier, and

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in Torrington Square. To-day we are going to Hampton Court to do a houseboat scene, and to-morrow we shall be working outside Scotland Yard and in Trafalgar Square. We shall then be finished, and I shall jump aboard the *Carmania* for home."

"You've forgotten to mention Baker Street," I put in. "Did you make any attempt to locate Sherlock Holmes's old rooms?" (This with memories of my own futile attempts, soon after my arrival in London, to find "221B.")

"We didn't make any pictures in Baker Street," the actor replied. "We discovered to our sorrow that, with so many of its houses replaced by shops and its very modern motor-buses, the Baker Street of to-day no longer suggests the Baker Street of Sherlock Holmes's time. Of all London's streets Gower Street seems to me most to suggest the Baker Street of the Adventures, but Gower Street proved a bit too busy to enable us to stage our 'Baker Street' scene there, so we took it in Torrington Square. The scene I refer to is the one in the Gillette play in which Professor Moriarty, after clearing Baker Street of the police and picketing it with his confederates, pays a visit to Sherlock Holmes. He drew off the police, you may remember, by arranging a fight in the street. This, by the way, was the only one of the scenes we have made in London in which we used 'supers' to any extent. Our policemen were the real article—former members of the London Police who were forced out by the strike. We obtained them from the Vigilance Society. Yes, our street fight was quite a realistic little affair and drew a keenly-interested and vastly amused audience.

"Apropos, I want to say," Barrymore went on, "how charmingly we have been treated while picture-making in London. Crowds have collected to watch us, of course, but they have been wonderfully decent about keeping out of our field of operations, and



A well-known incident from "A Scandal in Bohemia," the first of the famous Sherlock Holmes stories. John Barrymore's wonderful make-up as the old clergyman is seen to better advantage in the small photograph.

the police have been kindness itself. At Cambridge we were treated right royally and given every possible facility. The undergraduates chaffed us a bit, but several of them helped us immensely by inviting us into their rooms and allowing us to make sketches and measurements. As a result we shall be able to build students' chambers in our New York studio that will be the real thing to the last detail."

"But what on earth has Cambridge

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to do with Sherlock Holmes?" I burst out.

"It comes into the special prologue that the authors of our scenario, Marion Fairfax and Earl Browne, have written as an introduction to the original play," replied Barrymore, calmly.

"This is my own idea," he added, "and I consider that it will add immeasurably to the effectiveness of the play. My feeling is that, for film audiences, audiences scattered the world over, it is not sufficient merely to bring on Sherlock Holmes and show him at work. Of a cinema audience, even in London or New York, perhaps twenty-five per cent. have read Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories, while seventy-five per cent. have not. For the benefit of that seventy-five per cent., and to explain the conflict in the drama which we are presenting, we desire to make it clear why Sherlock Holmes is what he is—to trace, in other words, his development as the Master Sleuth. Our film, too, will bring out the romantic side of Holmes."

"But he didn't have one," I objected. "His biographer tells us, in so many words, in 'A Scandal in Bohemia,' that 'all emotions, and love particularly, were abhorrent to his cold, precise mind.'"

"But this is Sherlock Holmes as William Gillette depicted him," countered Barrymore, "and Gillette, you will remember, had Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's permission to marry Holmes or kill him or do anything he liked with him. We merely avail ourselves rather more generously of that permission.

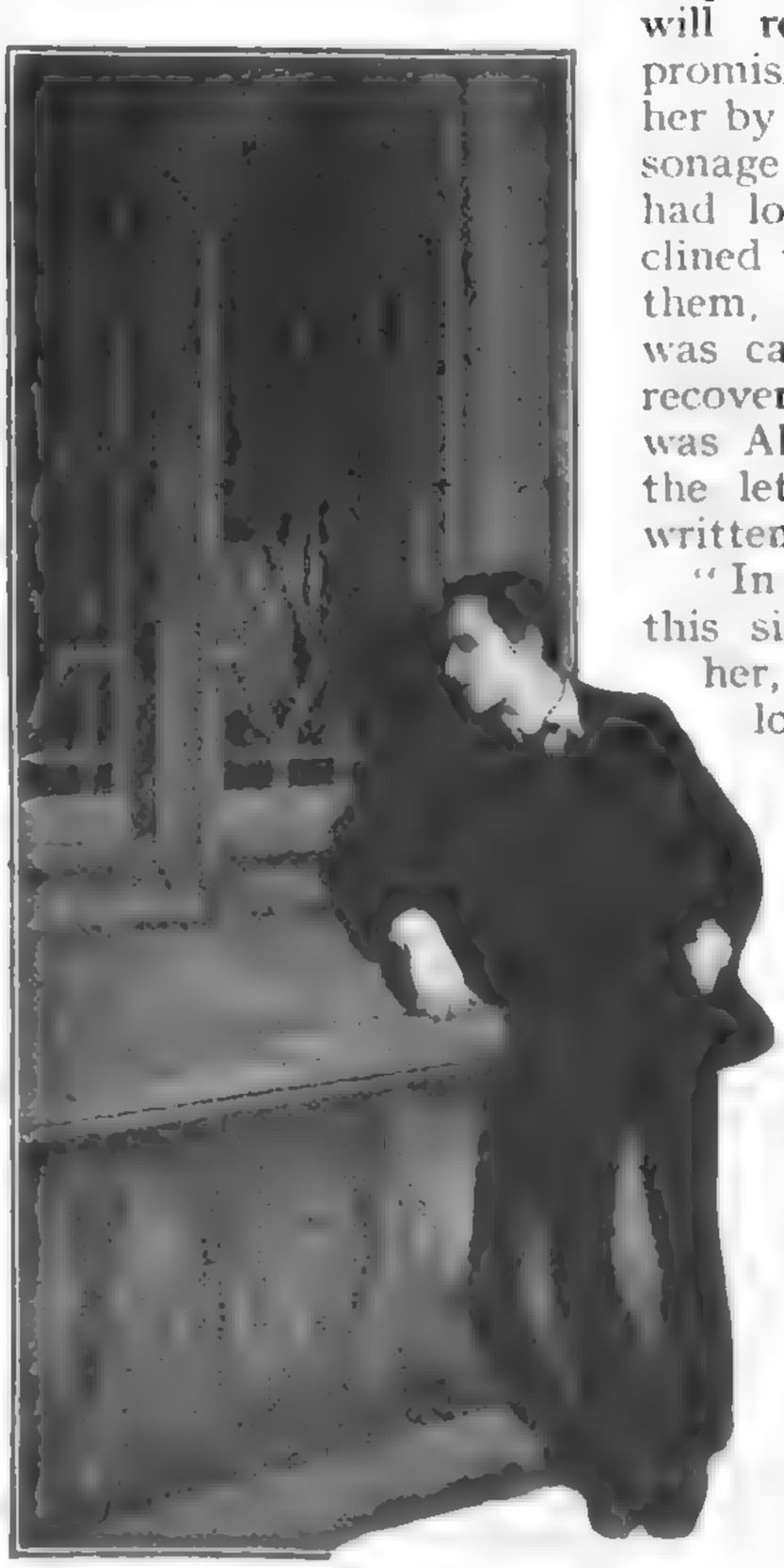
"We begin with Holmes and Dr. Watson as college mates at Cambridge," Barrymore went on. "We know, from 'The Adventure of the *Gloria Scott*,' that Holmes was a university man, and we selected Cambridge because it affords such wonderfully beautiful 'locations.' We picture the youthful Sherlock as a peculiar, half-poetic type, who is misunderstood by others and fails to understand himself. His wonderful deductive powers have begun to develop, but he himself has no idea how he will employ them. We introduce him at a time when he has become embittered by an unfortunate love affair. All at once a chance episode brings him into conflict with Professor Moriarty and reveals to him the extent of the ramifications of the devilish system which Moriarty has created, and in the centre of which he sits, in Sherlock Holmes's own words, motionless, like a spider in the centre of its web.'

"'At the beginning of the hour,' says Holmes in our 'script, 'I met love and it passed me by. At the end of the hour I met monstrous evil.'

"Holmes now decides what is to be his life work. It is to rid the world of Moriarty and his organization, and to this task he consecrates all his marvellous powers. Thus we work up to what was the *motif* of Gillette's enormously-successful play—the duel of wits between the Master Sleuth and the Master Crook. In the 'Memoirs,' of course, that duel ended with the antagonists falling, locked in each other's arms, over an Alpine precipice. In the Gillette play it concluded with the final capture of Moriarty by Sherlock Holmes, and with the detective finding happiness in the love of Lucy Faulkner.

"The latter's part in the story, which Gillette built out of the episode of Irene Adler, we develop also. Irene Adler, you will recall, possessed compromising letters written to her by a Bohemian royal personage with whom she had had love passages. She declined to give them up or sell them, and Sherlock Holmes was called in to attempt to recover them. In the play it was Alice Faulkner who had the letters, which had been written to her elder sister.

"In our prologue we tell this sister's story, and show her, jilted by her royal lover, committing suicide by hurling herself into a Swiss crevasse. This gives an even stronger motive for Alice Faulkner's attempted revenge, and leads up to the opening scene in Gillette's play, which passed, of course, at the home of the unscrupulous Larrabees."



John Barrymore as Sherlock Holmes in the days of his youth: one of the scenes at Cambridge in the new film.

Barrymore's next words revealed how real a character to him is Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's great sleuth.

"He was a very brilliant, odd man," he said, thoughtfully, "very lonely and whimsical.

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His essential kindliness was one of his dominating traits. He might have been the greatest crook that ever lived had it not been for this leaven of altruism in his nature. Moriarty fascinated him because he recognized in him an artist in crime, saw in him an adversary worthy of his steel. He understood the Professor's psychology. One man was for Society, the other against it. The line is really rather slender."

While he talked, Barrymore had been engaged in assuming the habiliments of Sherlock Holmes. From a pile of brown cardboard boxes on the floor bearing the classic name "Clarkson," he exhumed a pair of rather badly-cut trousers, tweed with a faint blue check on a background of blue-black, which he proceeded to don. Next he put on a somewhat disreputable stiff collar and tied round it a black cravat, carefully knotting the latter so that it sagged a little below the collar button. ("It was usual in those days to show a bit of the button," explained this keen student of detail.)

Next he got into a tight-fitting coat, of the "pea-jacket" type, brown tweed with an imperceptible check; the worst possible match for the trousers. And so, with the natural gauntness of his countenance emphasized by the make-up, stood revealed as the flesh-and-blood replica of the celebrated detective of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's imagination as first pictured in the famous STRAND illustrations of the late Sidney Paget.

An interesting interlude at this point was the unexpected advent of Gerald du Maurier ("one of my oldest and best friends," Barrymore explained), who had popped in to learn of the progress of the London "shootings," and incidentally to arrange a supper party. This was a situation with a special piquance—Raffles calling on Sherlock Holmes!

An instant after du Maurier's departure the telephone bell pealed, announcing that Barrymore's producer, Albert Parker, and his attendant satellites, including the camera men, were waiting below.



We are to see Sherlock Holmes as a young student of a dreamy, indeterminate, half-poetic type.

"So we are off for Hampton Court," said the actor. "Care to come along and see us at work?"

Who wouldn't jump at the chance of watching a Sherlock Holmes film in the making, of studying the methods of as acknowledged a master of his art as John Barrymore? I hastily signified my willingness to accompany him not only to Hampton Court but to John o' Groats if necessary.

"We are off, as you know," said Mr. Parker, "to picture a scene which occurs on a Thames houseboat. No, you are quite right, there was no such episode in Gillette's play, nor in the Adventures so far as I am aware. A houseboat struck us, however, as a picturesque 'location,' and a novel one so far as American films are concerned, so we decided on this as the scene of a murder which Holmes investigates in our version."

Sitting there with the mimic Holmes at my side, and with Knightsbridge, Hammersmith, Putney slipping past, I was, in fancy, Dr. Watson off with his friend and idol on one of their expeditions into the heart of a baffling mystery, too complex for solution by the professional sleuth-hounds of the Yard.

Barrymore broke in on my thoughts by beginning to talk of Edgar Allan Poe, traces of whose famous criminologist, Dupin, are readily discernible in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's characterization of his far more human and infinitely greater investigator.

"It is interesting to compare Dupin with Sherlock Holmes," he said, "and to realize why the one is a mere lay figure and the other a living, breathing human being. Poe occasionally dabbled in analysis as a distraction from the exercise of his fantastic, eerie imagination. His dynamic, eccentric handling of character naturally resulted in making his people marionettes. He was a Gordon Craig of literature, far more concerned with weird effects than with humanity.

"Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, on the other hand, is essentially a creative artist. He has the quality of drawing characters of

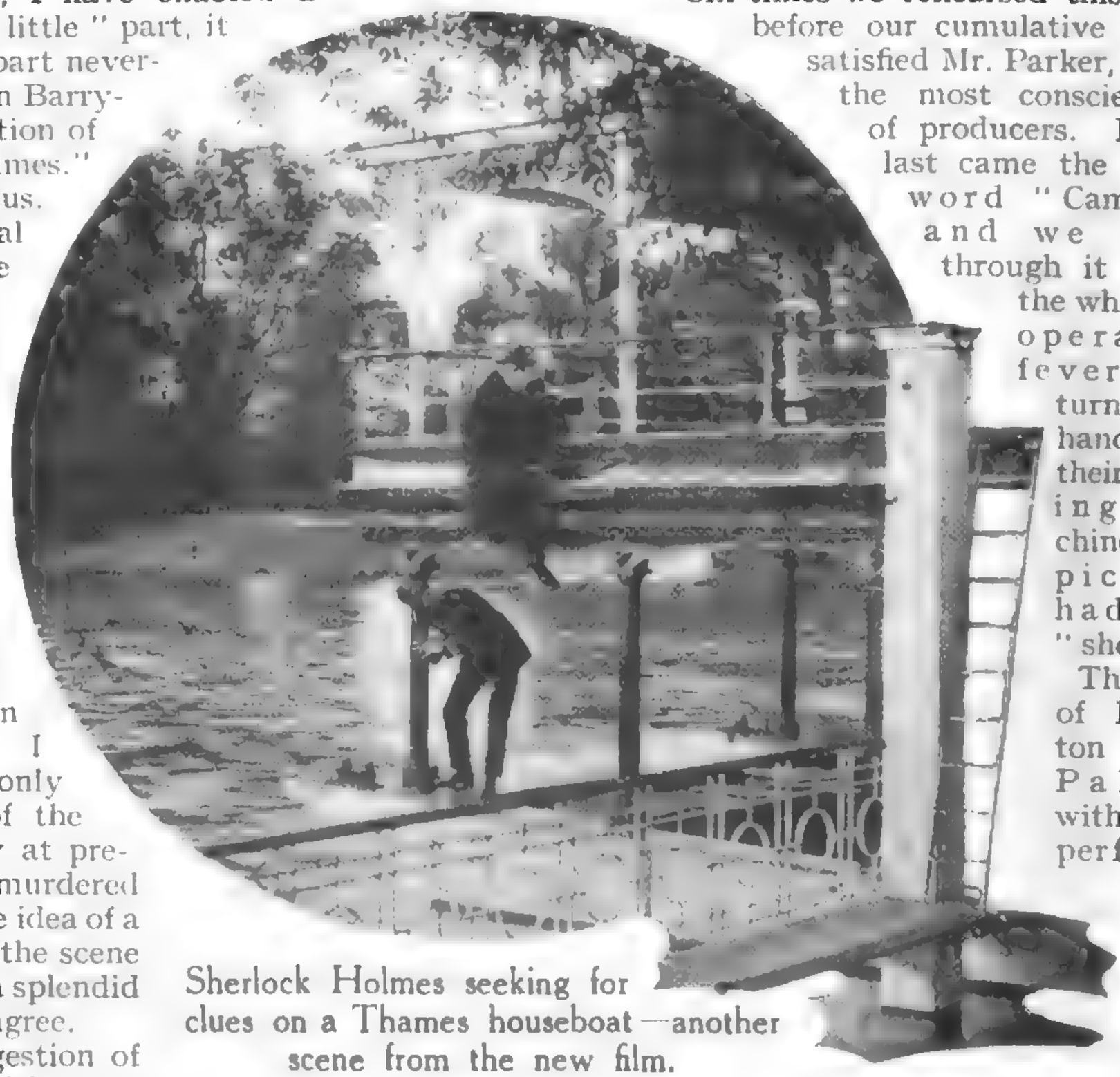
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extraordinary interest and charm. His heroes are vivid, vital, living. To me they are all real: Sherlock Holmes, Professor Challenger (a wonderful conception, the Professor!), Sir Nigel. Have you read 'The White Company'? To me it is Sir Arthur's finest achievement. I re-read it every two years."

Such talk made short the ride to Hampton Court, and it was with surprise that one discovered that we were passing the stately gates of the old Palace.

And now an experience was forthcoming of which I shall unfailingly boast as often as opportunity occurs. I, even I who write these lines, have "acted for the films." What is more, I have enacted a part, a "very little" part, it is true, but a part nevertheless, in John Barrymore's production of "Sherlock Holmes."

If fell out thus. The principal scene which we had come to "shoot" was enacted around the gateway giving entrance to the houseboat (moored close to the Karsino) that had been the scene of the murder in the film story. I fancy that only the authors of the scenario know at present who was murdered or why, but the idea of a houseboat as the scene of a killing is a splendid one, you will agree.



Sherlock Holmes seeking for clues on a Thames houseboat—another scene from the new film.

At the suggestion of the producer I became one of a crowd, an excited crowd otherwise composed of horny-handed sons of toil in their shirt-sleeves, a milkman (complete with pails), a girl with a white bulldog on a lead, a couple of young men of the "knut" variety, and one or two slaveys (all these secured the day before by the resourceful producer), who fought for entrance to the scene of the crime—but who were sternly denied entrance by a Cerberus of a "bobby," who held the gate in the name of the law.

Crestfallen and murmuring, we satisfied our curiosity as best we might by gazing through the intervening palings. And then turned to gape open-mouthed as there stalked up to the gate a gaunt, hawk-faced man, with an air of quiet masterfulness, who likewise sought entry and was, at first, as sternly denied.

A card was produced, silently handed to the representative of law and order, who grudgingly consented to read the name it bore. Instantly his forbidding expression changed to one of mingled surprise and awe. "Mr. Sherlock Holmes!" Up went his hand to the peak of his helmet in respectful salutation, open he flung the gate. And through it strode the great detective. Obedient to instructions we of the crowd surged forward again, thinking to enter in his wake, but only to be again repelled. Six times we rehearsed this scene before our cumulative efforts satisfied Mr. Parker, one of the most conscientious of producers. But at last came the magic word "Camera!" and we went through it again, the while two operators feverishly turned the handles of their clicking machines. The picture had been "shot."

The gates of Hampton Court Palace, with their perfectly-wrought Lion and Unicorn, and the front elevation of Wolsey's masterwork in the background, had proved too fascinating a "location" to be neglected by the producer, and presently were made the setting for another picture. There was nothing much in this scene, which merely consisted of the descent of Sherlock Holmes from an ancient fly, hastily requisitioned from the nearby railway station. But the episode, with its effective background, no doubt will vastly intrigue America's army of "movie" enthusiasts.

And so back to London, in the gathering dusk of an autumn afternoon, the entire business, the journey included, having taken less than three hours.

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LADIES WHO LOVED DON JUAN

BY

MARY DAVRON

ILLUSTRATED BY S ABBEY

"GOOD LUCK forto-morrow night!" Her lesson ended, Miss Lila Lloyd obviously dallied as she put on her gloves before leaving the studio. "If there is anything we can do, please let us. Mother and I——"

"It is most kind of you," answered Van Gerbig, bending low over her fair hand, "but there is nothing." And as he straightened to his full six-feet-four he could not but note the glowing look in the eyes of the maiden. Whereupon the chivalry in him was touched, and he added :—

"I shall sing 'one' song for you."

And when she had been borne away by Martha, the sphinx-like duenna who always accompanied her, Van Gerbig turned to his piano with a feeling of pleased satisfaction. For it was upon the approval of Miss Lloyd and others of her ilk that his immense popularity was based.

The telephone rang, and the modulated voice of Mrs. Sinclair Welles cooed softly :—

"Jan, I have two additional guests for to-morrow night. Can you let me have the tickets, please?"

"With pleasure, madam."

"And, Jan——" hesitatingly.

"Yes, madam?"

"Jan——" Her voice caressed the name, and she continued, softly : "I do hope your concert will be a success."

"It is bound to be, madam. Everybody has been so kind—so good."

"Oh, we all want it to go well. We want it to go just perfectly, Jan. And I — I, especially."

"I shall sing 'one' song for you," concluded Van Gerbig finally.

Then his accompanist entered, and the two went over the selections on the programme for the concert of the following evening.

Fate had done queer things to Van Gerbig. She seemed always to be presenting him with the choicest gifts and then defying him to use them. His voice—even the most grudging had proclaimed it full of promise, yet the one who would back his opinion with the loan of capital to develop it had been surprisingly difficult to find. And just as the voice was beginning to justify his faith that gentleman died. Whereupon Van Gerbig had to put the higher ambitions aside for the time, and by the tortuous path of teaching to maintain himself until somehow the coveted big chance should arrive.

And lo! Pupils came in surprising numbers. Most were of the restless sex—some, earnest students, but the majority learning to sing this year as they would be learning to paint next year if some fascinating teacher appeared, or to dance the next should the instructor prove sufficiently interesting. Van Gerbig despised this latter type, but one and all they beamed upon Van Gerbig.

And with the money rolling in there remained only the big ambition unsatisfied.

And now he was to give his concert! Pupils' friends had seen to it that the affair was fully subscribed. More than that, they appeared as feverishly anxious as himself that things should go well.

The telephone rang again.

"Better muzzle that thing to-day," said Harding, the accompanist, who had bachelor quarters with Van Gerbig.

"This is Mrs. Preston Thwaite," came over the telephone, even as Van Gerbig recognized the voice of the richest and most stupid of his pupils. The lady wished to know if there were any way in which she might be of service for to-morrow evening? Could she place one of her cars at his disposal? That had been arranged for? Well, then, would Van Gerbig join her—and her husband, of course—at a little supper after the concert?

Van Gerbig was regretful to decline, but he had already accepted Mrs. Justin Browne's invitation for the same thing. More regrets on both sides. Well, some other time—perhaps the evening after? Van Gerbig would be charmed.

"Then there isn't a single thing I can do?" wistfully came over the wire.

"Nothing, madam. But, thank you—thank you. You are so kind."

"Well, here's hoping you will be in excellent voice. I shall be as nervous as you until I see how it goes."

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"Your interest, madam, it is so encouraging. I shall sing 'one' song for you."

Nor was Van Gerbig insincere. He was merely paying in the only coin demanded of him for the generous patronage he was receiving. And he meant it about the song, too. Into everything he sang would go the best he was capable of, and it would be for Mrs. Sinclair Welles, Mrs. Preston Thwaite, Miss Lila Lloyd, and every other person in the audience that he would sing each song.

That evening—the one previous to the concert—Van Gerbig spent many moments in deep thought; then, without hesitation, made out a pass for two, wrote across it, "Come if you can," and inscribed upon the envelope a woman's name—that of the recent bride of one of the richest men in London.

She had been a fellow-passenger on the steamer that brought him across. There had been a commonplace enough travelling acquaintance, during which he had concluded that her funds were as low as his own. It was a pity, too, he thought, for her voice was not without promise and she herself was very beautiful.

Shortly after landing he called, and she had not been hopeful about the outcome for herself, but expressed every belief that he would make his way successfully.

"The women will take you up," she had said as her gaze slowly travelled over his splendid height, resting finally on the thick, black waves of his hair. He had not quite grasped her meaning then, but he saw she felt sure of his future, and her confidence imparted to him a certain sense of security.

"And you, mademoiselle?" he had inquired.

"Oh, I?" She had shrugged her shoulders, made a deprecating little gesture with her hands, then abruptly changed the subject.

After that he had called several times. Then one fairy, fragrant evening they went for a walk in Kensington Gardens. All the glory of May was in the air. They ceased talking of art and became merely man and woman. Their hands met and finally their lips. No words were spoken, but a question had been asked and answered, nevertheless. That night



Van Gerbig forgot the soft eyes beaming upon him and gave forth all of music that was in him.

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Van Gerbig tossed on his pillow until dawn, and his prayers for artistic achievement and consequent economic independence took on new and burning fervour.

A week later the newspapers published the news of her sensational marriage. A meeting, an overnight courtship—so the papers had it—and the beautiful young music student had become the wife of Hornaday Brooks, millionaire merchant and man-about-town. True, he was old enough to be her father, and another wife had divorced him. And to say that Van Gerbig resented him all the more because of these things will, perhaps, go far to indicate the quality of his love.

All this was months ago, and he had not seen her since. He was not self-analytical enough to realize that his feeling for her must have approached perfection, for it held in it something of forgiveness, as well as the pathetic desire that the one woman who had entered the inner chamber of his heart should be there to hear him at his best and to see that in the matter of friends and material prosperity his star was in the bright ascendant. So he sent the ticket.

Yet when the concert hour had come, when the accompanist had seated himself and Van Gerbig stood in the centre of the stage with soft, feminine eyes beaming upon him, Van Gerbig forgot them all, and, turning to the seductive spell of Art, his mistress, gave forth all of music that was in him. And not alone by the applause and the appreciative smiles and nods did he know that it was of his best. His own judgment told him he had done surpassingly well.

After the first few songs he began to be aware of his audience as individuals. Then he sought and finally found—her. She was seated in the balcony beside her husband. Van Gerbig recognized him from his pictures. On the other side of her, half concealed by a post, was another man, and Van Gerbig noted when he had finished a particularly well sung aria that the girl had turned enthusiastically to this other man. Twice again he saw her do the same thing.

Standing in the wings later, as he listened to the demand for an encore from a point where he could watch her face, the old wound she had dealt him broke out afresh and bitter resentment swept over him—resentment, humiliation, and the stinging hurt of unsatisfied longing, yet withal the unmistakable knowledge that she was still " the " woman.

He returned to the stage and spoke a moment with the accompanist, who straightway changed the tune he had begun.

Then with fervour and heat and intensity Van Gerbig sang :—

I came with a song on my lips,
I came with a rose in my hand,
I came with a void in my heart,
O Love, do you understand ?

The song has died on my lips,
You took the rose from my hand,
The void is still in my heart,
O Love, do you understand ?
O Love, do you understand ?

The appeal was terrific and irresistible. And as his voice rose in passionate repetition

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of the last line, the crowd sat tense and still, many bent forward in their seats. It was as though a direct accusation were being made against one among them. Then when the last notes had died out the tension snapped. The audience stirred, then burst into magnificent applause. Only a woman in the balcony sat quiet. And finally, as if remembering something, she, too, applauded with the rest.

But Van Gerbig was gone. Moreover, he refused to come back. And the concert was over.

THE next day Van Gerbig had promised himself a holiday, so there were no lessons to give. Nevertheless, he was awakened at nine o'clock from a fitful sleep. Harding had gone out and, thoughtfully, had muffled the telephone. But with such insistence was it rung it could not fail to wake him.

" Hallo ! " he called, sleepily.

" Jan ? " Ever so soft and low were the tones.

Yes—yes, Mrs. Welles," and an unaccountable feeling of apprehension seized him.

" It—it was all so wonderful," she went on

" I am glad you found it so," he assured her.

" How could I help it ? And, oh, Jan—that song—— ! " Either words failed her, or she waited for something.

" Yes, madam ? I am happy you liked it. Which song, madam ? "

" Why—why, the last song—the—the one you sang to me ! "

Van Gerbig caught his breath. The lady gained in volubility. " Oh, Jan, I had no idea—— When can you come ? We will talk it over. I am so confused—and so happy. Really, dear, I had no idea——"

And so on, until finally the conversation ended with evident assurances from Mrs. Welles that she would await his call—as early as he could come. Or should she come down ?

Van Gerbig replied hastily that he would call.

A few minutes later a note was pushed under his door. It was delicately tinted and perfumed. It read :—

" I shall be expecting you early. Can you come before luncheon ? Then we can arrange matters—about Preston and all. I have always known you cared, but never how much until you sang that song last night.

" Come as soon as you can, dear.

" GEORGINE THWAITE."

The note dropped from his fingers and consternation spread over his face. What was the woman proposing ? " What " about Preston ? Then he remembered having heard some talk of a divorce, desired by Mrs. Thwaite but hotly contested by her husband, whose blameless mode of living was the serious drawback which prevented the divorce coming through. It was rumoured at the time that Biardot, the violinist, was mentioned somewhere in the thing, and Van Gerbig wondered now just how much Biardot was to blame.

The door opened and Harding entered.

" Thought you were going to stay in bed this morning ? " he questioned.

" Ah, but, my dear friend, matters press. It is of necessity that I am up ! "

Harding's glance fell upon the dainty note lying on the floor, and he smiled.

" Getting 'em already, are you ? H'm ! I can't count the number of concerts I've appeared at, and I never got one of those things in my life."

" Be happy, my friend, that it is so with you," Van Gerbig answered, the worried expression deepening on his face.

THEN the doorbell rang and Harding turned upon him an interrogative glance.

" No pupils to-day, are there ? " he asked as he went to the door. Van Gerbig withdrew to the bedroom, and, drawing his dressing-gown around him, listened. Harding was speaking.

" Why, good morning, Miss Lloyd. All alone this morning, are you ? "

" Yes," came the half-whispered reply, and Van Gerbig could hear her breath quickly come and go as she falteringly said his own name and asked if she might see him.

" I'm afraid he isn't presentable," answered the perplexed Harding. " He is taking a holiday to-day. You—you haven't made a mistake about your lesson time, have you ? "

" No—oh, no ! It is nothing like that. But I supposed he'd want to see me as soon as possible, and I—I stole away without Martha."

Surprised disappointment was beginning to come out in her tones, and Van Gerbig from his listening post thought he detected tears in her voice.

" Is there anything I can do for you—any message I can take to him ? "

" Oh, no ! It is very important. Nobody but he will do. I—I thought he'd be expecting to hear from me." It seemed to Van Gerbig the tears had gained ascendancy by that time.

" There's evidently some mistake," Harding was saying, soothingly. " I know he wouldn't disappoint you for anything in the world. But I'll tell him you called, and ask him to telephone you." Miss Lloyd was the sort to whom one promised anything rather

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than precipitate the teary downfall indicated by her pouting lips and dewy eyes.

The door closed upon her and Harding crossed to the bedroom.

"What the devil?" he exploded, inquiringly. "What in thunder brought that girl here? Do you know?"

"My dear friend, I fear I do. I am considerably upset. A casual remark meaning nothing—nothing, I assure you—has been taken most seriously to mean things I never dreamed it should." And he gave Harding an outline of his dilemma—all except his reason for singing that last song as he had.

Harding emitted a long, low whistle.

"Now there'll be the devil to pay. There's three pupils you'll lose for a certainty—when they find out you didn't mean what they thought. You fellows that go around——!" and he shook his head a warning shake.

"But I meant nothing—only a compliment for the moment. Many times in my country did I say the same thing, yet nothing occurred."

"Your country isn't this country! You've made three enemies now, and Heaven knows how many more took that song to themselves. If you aren't careful you'll lose all your pupils and all your friends at one fell swoop."

"But there must be a way out of it!"

"There is. Marriage. But you can't marry all three. If Mrs. Thwaite could get Preston to divorce her, you——"

'Be still, Harding. You talk and talk, but don't help me. I don't want to call on Mrs. Thwaite to-day, or on Mrs. Welles. And I won't telephone Miss Lloyd. Another thing, all this"—and he made a sweeping gesture with his arm—"all this may explain the surprising attitude of Mrs. Browne last night at supper. I didn't want to go—I wanted to have supper with you, Harding—but she—she had sent her car and I had to go. Why, my friend—I ask you why?—cannot a man be civil and yet not be misconstrued?"

"Lots of men can. I can. But if 'you' don't keep your promises you are likely to have the whole crowd descending on this place—and all at the same time!"

"You do not think they would!"

"I certainly do!"

Which resulted in Harding telephoning for a room at the hotel across the way and in Van Gerbig's repairing there at once to spend his day of rest.

SCARCELY an hour later Harding telephoned. "Two more letters," he said.

"Burn them—tear them up!" shouted Van Gerbig, irritated at his enforced exile from his home. "Do whatever you wish with them. Don't let me see either of them!"

"Mrs. Thwaite called up. Wanted to know if you had started for her house or should she send her car for you. Mrs. Welles telephoned for the same reason. Mrs. Justin Browne called up to say she'd be at home any time to-day. Miss Lloyd——"

"Mon Dieu!" exclaimed Van Gerbig.

"I staved them all off. Told them I'd no idea where you were. But these letters—one of them has a heavy crest and the other looks like a business communication—as though one of the husbands had got busy!"

"Keep them, I told you. You never had any like them, you said. Keep them for yourself. Don't let anyone know where I am."

But inside of ten minutes Harding was at the hotel and standing, breathless, before Van Gerbig.

"Man, it's come—your chance!" he gasped.

Van Gerbig started, uncomprehending.

"You said I could open them, and I did," Harding stammered, the speed with which he had come having impaired his powers of speech. Then he laid before Van Gerbig a page which read:—

"MY DEAR VAN GERBIG: At the insistence of my very dear friend, Mr. Hornaday Brooks, I went to hear you sing last night. May I say I was charmed, and offer my congratulations?

"At Mrs. Brooks's suggestion I am setting three o'clock this afternoon aside for you. Bring anything you like to sing. And I shall have a contract waiting for you."

The name signed was one that had haunted his wildest dreams. The name of one who had seemed as inaccessible as God. The man of men who could unlock for him the golden door.

Van Gerbig's eyes dilated, his body relaxed, and a great calm descended upon him. At three that afternoon! Softly his lips murmured the great name. Harding stood by, sympathetic and speechless, then finally held out to him the other letter.

"I thought you'd like to see this," he said, and Van Gerbig read:—

"JAN: Why did you do that? Perhaps I deserved it, yet I cannot feel that I did. If only circumstances had been otherwise! Won't you forget? It can be done when one must.

"And when another letter comes to you to-day, and when things happen that will as a result of it, will you not think kindly of one who, in counselling you to forget, hopes fondly that you never will?

"And when the applause is loudest and the praise is sweetest, will you forgive

"VIOLA."

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THE DOOB IN EUROPE

by

WILLIAM CAINE
AND
H·M·BATEMAN

OUR Imperial Policy requires that, from time to time, a coloured potentate should be uprooted from his native jungle, oasis, mountain fastness, atoll, mangrove swamp, ice-floe, or whatever it may be, transported at our expense to England and there royally entertained, while he is staggered with the marvels of our civilization. This costs us a good deal, but it is supposed to pay us, because these rajahs, sheikhs, amirs, bongs, wakeroos, chugs, and other autocrats become impressed with the folly of hoping ever to get rid of us, and on their return preach to their subjects the virtues of acquiescence in things as they are. Thus is our share of the white man's burden riveted ever more firmly upon our shoulders and continues ever more steadily to flow into our breeches-pocket.

Recently it was decided that Gumbo, the intelligent young Doob of Bwmembmwg, should have his eyes opened to the advantages of not aspiring to self-determination and the wisdom of standing in with his great pink brother across the great blue water.

A few weeks later he was landed at Southampton, brought to London by special train, and installed in the royal suite at the Hotel Exorbitant.

The people of Bwmembmwg are physically the superiors of all the other inhabitants of the KuKuKuKu Hinterland. Doob Gumbo is a notable specimen of his race.

Six feet seven inches tall, seventy-three round the chest, he has arms and legs, hands and feet that more than correspond. His strength is the strength of seven bulls. In his upper jaw he has two rows of teeth; in his lower, three. He can devour a chicken in six bites; though, if it has been plucked, he can manage it in two. His facial angle is precisely that of a cat; his skull is equally feline. With his glorious lungs he can out-howl any twenty ordinary medical students. A superb creature, yet simple withal, and lovable as a child. As a child's, too, is his temper—perfect so long as he has his own way in everything; it is only when his desires are thwarted that he ceases to be amiable. But then he ceases altogether.



They gave Burr-Laking the job of personally conducting the Doob while he was in England.

All this being so, the Colonial Office felt wisely that this exceptionally lusty and unimaginably primitive guest

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might require a rather special bear-leader. So they gave Burr-Laking the job of personally conducting the Doob while he was in England. Burr-Laking is, as I need hardly say, the smallest, mildest, timidest, pink-and-whitest little croquet-player in the whole Civil Service. Of the Doob's language Burr-Laking couldn't speak a word, so that he had to be given an interpreter. That's how we love to do things. How else should we ever have anything to muddle through? But our departments can be trusted to take care of Britain's reputation. Yes, we can count on them for that.

The Doob had been practically *in extremis* all the way from Mbkobk, where he had embarked, to Basingstoke, where he had begun to forget the sea, and he had spent all the rest of the train journey to Waterloo under the seat, praying to the god Nm. But when (some ten porters having dragged him out at the terminus) he found that he was still alive, and able to eat five or six chickens *au naturel*, his self-confidence began to return to him, and he made no difficulty about getting into the limousine and allowing himself to be driven to his hotel. After the train this seemed like nothing at all. The god Nm had evidently intervened in his favour. The Doob vowed personally to offer fifty goats to the god Nm before the sun went down.

Fortunately for the Hotel Exorbitant and Burr-Laking—or was it unfortunately? It is a hard question to answer—well, anyhow, the Doob quickly forgot his promise to the god Nm, so interested did he become in the spectacle of London. What he thought of Westminster Bridge, Whitehall, Trafalgar Square, and the statue of King George III., I don't know. He didn't say. He sat perfectly silent, staring out through the window of the limousine and rolling his enormous eyes actively from side to side. Every now and then he emitted a thunder-clap of laughter which hurt the drums of Burr-Laking's ears. But the interpreter was not called upon to elucidate any royal observations.



The Doob swept the lift-girl out of his way.

Burr-Laking made no effort to draw his charge out. His duty, as he conceived it, did not call for anything of the kind. He was only too glad to leave the Doob—who inspired him with terror—to his own reflections.

The limousine drew up at the Hotel Exorbitant, and the party descended and entered the hall. The Doob, Burr-Laking, and the interpreter (whose name was Guedala) entered the lift. It was the chief desire of the moment with Burr-Laking to get the Doob safely housed in the royal suite.

The smart little girl in purple coat and breeches and peaked cap who drove the lift of the Hotel Exorbitant followed her three passengers into her box and slammed the gate.

The Doob, who was convinced that he had been trapped, uttered a howl of dismay and hurled himself against the steel lattice. While all the people in the hall and the lounge sprang from their seats with blanched faces Guedala spoke a few reassuring words in the ear of the Doob, who, seeing that Burr-Laking, Guedala, and the lift-girl kept him company, forthwith forgot his terrors and expressed his recovered ease of mind in a laugh which completely disorganized a tape-machine situated some ten feet away from him.

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Nothing can upset a lift-girl. This one, as soon as she could get to her handle—that is to say, as soon as the Doob came out of the corner where it was situated—laid hold of it and started the lift on its upward journey.

Instantly the Doob let out another howl and fell grovelling on the floor. Guedala stooped over him, murmuring words of comfort and cheer. The Doob found that nothing dreadful happened to him and at once—so volatile is this person's temperament—discovered that he liked going up in lifts. By the time the first floor was reached he had acquired a taste for it. It cannot be said that the Doob was slow to identify himself with new conditions. The train, indeed, had terrified him to prostration and vows; but the motor-car (since it, like the train, proceeded horizontally) had affected him not at all. Now (without a word of preparation) he found himself travelling rapidly upwards; but almost before his first bellow of anguish had ceased to echo through the corridors of the Hotel Exorbitant, he had thrown off all his fears and opened his senses to the agreeable impressions of perpendicular motion. It seems, truly, that when the intelligent young Doob of Bwmembmwg was selected to receive the gospel of European civilization a wise choice was made.

LET us not, however, go too fast. Up to this point the Doob may indeed be said to have done well. But the trouble with these charming barbarians is this: you never know how far they are susceptible to new ideas. They learn quickly and look as if they are going to do wonders. Then, quite suddenly, their limit is reached and they refuse, or are unable, to move onwards by so much as a step. Suddenly the veneer cracks and beneath it is disclosed the Immemorial Stationary.

With the Doob this limit had now been reached.

The lift stopped. Its trig little conductress slammed the door back. Outside on the landing appeared the assistant manager of the Hotel Exorbitant, bent double, showing his teeth and flanked by similarly obsequious menials.

The Doob stretched out an arm, seized the gate and closed it emphatically. Then he turned to Guedala (he had already learned to ignore Burr-Laking) and said, "Gib urr ib bah!"

"What's he say?" Burr-Laking asked, with some idea of asserting his own importance.

"He say," explained Guedala, "'Let a female slabe do that againa.'"

"Jah!" said the Doob. "Hooish!"

"He say," Guedala interpreted, "'Let it do that, dam' queek.'"

"Well," said Burr-Laking, "I suppose if he wants to, eh?" And to the lift-girl he said, "Take us down and up again, will you, my dear?"

The lift-girl (whom nothing could rob of her poise) obliged with a solo on the handle. The lift descended to the hall floor; rose to the level of the royal suite. The Doob meanwhile—his eyes sparkling with intelligence—closely observed the maiden's movements.

The lift halted. The lift-girl flung open the door. The assistant manager and his underlings again prepared in a becoming manner to receive His Majesty. Again they were disappointed.

The Doob, with one hand, threw the gate across while, with the other, he swept the lift-girl out of his way. Then he laid hold of the starting handle and began to amuse himself. I may remind you that he was (for a Doob) highly intelligent. He had marked what the girl did, and he proceeded to do it as if he had done nothing else all his life.

For an hour and forty minutes, by the watch of the assistant manager, he caused the lift of the Hotel Exorbitant to spring up and down in its shaft, howling all the time with volcanic laughter. This was the life. This was worth all the horrors of the journey from Bwmembmwg. What were three weeks of uninterrupted sea-sickness when they brought you to a country where, simply by moving a handle this way or that, you could soar into the air like a bird and drop down a precipice like a stone and never be the worse for it? This was the white man's magic, was it? Well, all he said was that it was good enough for him. He rather thought he had caught the trick of it pretty well. Eh, what?

At first Burr-Laking (though in great dread) was disposed not to interfere. He gave the lift-girl a pound note by way of moral and material damage—for the Doob had grievously wounded her self-importance and had torn off one of her shoulder-straps—and begged her to be sensible. He also dried her tears for her. I was wrong, you see, when I said that nothing could rob her of her poise. The Doob could.

But after about ten minutes of it Burr-Laking began to think that he had better exercise a little authority, for the whole hotel was in an uproar. Everybody within sound of the Doob's cachinnations had come running; the hall in the vicinity of the lift swarmed with terrified people, and on every landing a white-faced group of visitors and chambermaids was collected. Innumerable

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persons were pressing in from the street, and every time Burr-Laking descended to the level of the hall the helmets of more policemen were visible to him.

Burr-Laking had all the English gentleman's intense dislike of a scene. He had, too, all the Civil servant's eagerness to avoid responsibility. His natural instincts, therefore, prompted him to let things take their course until the Doob should presently weary of his sport and suffer himself to be secluded within the royal suite.

But there are occasions when the natural instincts of a gentlemanly Civil servant have to be flouted, and this was one of them. No person upon whom responsibility could be shuffled off being present, Burr-Laking was obliged to assume it.

He stepped resolutely forward and laid a hand upon the Doob's arm.

"That's enough," he said. "Stop it." And he tried to remember that the whole might of the British Empire was behind him.

The Doob put Burr-Laking aside, quite good-humouredly. The Doob was in the happiest possible frame of mind.

Burr-Laking disentangled himself from Guedala, rose and said to him, firmly: "Tell this fool to stop his nonsense at once."

Guedala smiled deprecatingly and spread his hands, but said no word.

Burr-Laking again advanced upon the Doob; again seized his arm. "Stop it, I say," he shouted.

The Doob searched quickly among the folds of his robe and produced a knife about three feet long. This he presented, point upwards, at the nose of Burr-Laking.

"Charr!" he bellowed. "Woola-boola-mpow!"

"He say," Guedala, earning his money, interpreted, "he stick-a that thing in you, sir, eef you no please go to hell."

Burr-Laking decided that this was not the time for relying upon the support of the British Empire. He sat down between Guedala and the lift-girl and adopted a policy of *laissez faire*.

An hour and ten minutes passed.

Perhaps you wonder why they didn't stop the lift. You see, the Doob was a sovereign, and it was wholly against the principles of the Hotel Exorbitant to thwart the desires of such people. Short of burning the place down, any royal personage who descended at the Hotel Exorbitant was free to indulge his fancy precisely as he pleased. It all went on the bill. I don't think it ever even occurred to the manager that he could stop the lift until he heard Burr-Laking shout, while he plunged into the view of those in the hall for the fifteenth time, "Don't you dare to stop this thing, unless you want your licence cancelled!" After that, of course, there was no question of interfering with the Doob's pleasures. The Colonial Office had assumed responsibility. The manager spoke a word or two in the ear of the police inspector, who with his men rapidly cleared the hall of journalists, pickpockets, and others who had no business to be there, while the manager tactfully sent the fire brigade away. The people who did have business to be in the hotel soon got tired of the Doob and his lift and used to the noise he was making. They went back to their teas. The incident was as good as over—for everyone but the Doob, Burr-Laking, Guedala, and the lift-girl. These persons continued to ascend and descend for another hour or more to the accompaniment of the Doob's tremendous laughter.

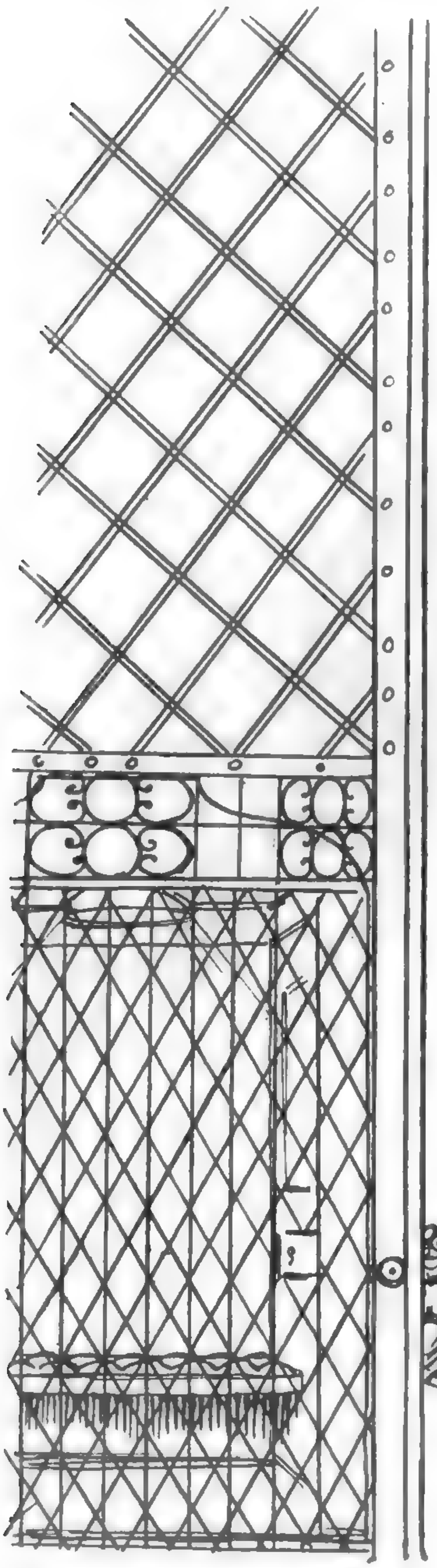


Burr-Laking said to the interpreter, firmly: "Tell this fool to stop his nonsense at once."

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Fortunately for the Doob's companions the lift continued to function admirably. I tremble to think what might have happened had it stuck. He would probably have impaled Burr-Laking and Guedala on his knife and eaten the lift-girl. She would only have made about ten bites for him.



However, nothing of this sort occurred. The Doob's volatile nature at last reasserted itself. He wearied suddenly of his fun. His desires achieved a new orientation. He stopped the lift, opened the gate, and stepped into the hall.

"Bow wow," he observed.

"He say, sir," Guedala interpreted to Burr-Laking, "he like-a to eat somethinks per'aps."

"Chow," said the Doob.

"An' dam' queek," said Guedala.

NATURALLY Burr-Laking was broken over this business. Somebody had to be, for the papers next morning were awful, and the Colonial Secretary had the bad time of his life during questions. It was hard luck on Burr-Laking, of course. If things had fallen out otherwise than they did, he might easily have got an O.B.E. out of the Doob's visit. But that's the way of the world. We needn't worry about Burr-Laking. The British Empire has no use for failures.

But I mustn't leave this matter here. That would be to do a grave injustice to the Doob. I don't want you to think him utterly volatile and incapable of fixing his mind on anything whatever for more than an hour or two.

So let me tell you that no sooner was he well fed than the Doob returned to the lift of the Hotel Exorbitant and indulged himself with a further seven jubilant hours at the controlling handle.

Then he desired, quite suddenly, to sleep, and so



When the Doob steps into the cage, just after breakfast, and sends himself aloft upon his

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the other people in the hotel were at last able to sleep also.

Next morning he announced to Guedala his intention of buying the lift and asked to know its price. As he owned, absolutely, four hundred square miles of first-class rubber forest, the Doob was in a position to satisfy his whims. Guedala did not therefore try to dissuade him from his purpose, but told him that he could, of course, arrange the affair easily and that the lift could of course be sent out to Africa at once.

But he was careful to point out that, if this was done, the Doob would not be able to amuse himself with his purchase while he was in England. On the other hand, if he waited to have it sent out to Africa until he should depart for that country, a considerable period must elapse, after his arrival at Bwmembmwg, until the thing could be put up, during which time he, the Doob, must necessarily be deprived of its advantages. The lift in question was, moreover, an integral part of a huge block of masonry, which would cost an enormous sum both to buy and dispatch to Bwmembmwg. What the Doob wanted was a lift, not an hotel. What Guedala therefore proposed was that he should order for the Doob an entirely new lift and have it sent out to Bmwembmwg, there to be erected ready against its owner's return. Thus not only would the Doob save a great deal of money, but he would never, except while he should be on the sea, be without his chosen pastime.

It took Guedala over a week to introduce these conceptions into the Doob's skull, but he finally succeeded, and was instructed to carry out the arrangement he had outlined. This he did, making incidentally seven hundred and fifty-three pounds two shillings and eightpence commission.

As for the Doob, he remained in England until he had word that his lift had been put up in the compound of his palace. Then he sailed for Africa, with his appetite for lift-exercise quite unappeased by an almost uninterrupted sojourn of three months in the elevator of the Hotel Exorbitant.

The Royal Lift at Bmwembmwg is easily the most remarkable structure of its kind in the world. It completely dominates the town of small mud huts from the middle of which it rises. Three hundred feet high, its slender scarlet shaft of steel girders and lattice work is visible for miles in every direction. Not a soul in the country but regards it with a lofty pride and a profound reverence. When the Doob, attired in a frogged coat and breeches of purple cloth, high patent-leather boots, and a peaked cap upon which in gold thread the words "Lift Attendant" have been embroidered, steps into the cage, just after breakfast, and sends himself aloft upon his first journey for the day, there is always an immense concourse of his subjects in attendance. And while, all day long, they watch him rushing up and down inside the lattice, their loyal hearts swell with thankfulness to think that they have a monarch so extremely civilized.



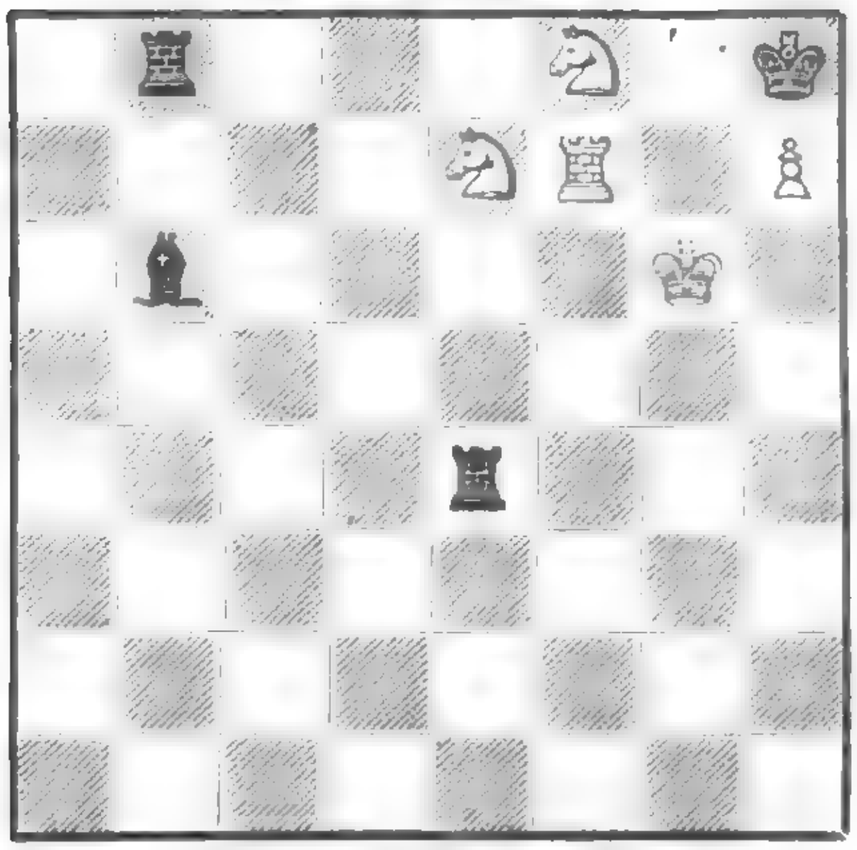
first journey for the day, there is always an immense concourse of his subjects in attendance.

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PERPLEXITIES. By Henry E. Dudeney.

593.—A CURIOUS END-GAME.

BLACK.—4 Pieces.



WHITE.—5 Pieces.

White to play and mate in four moves.

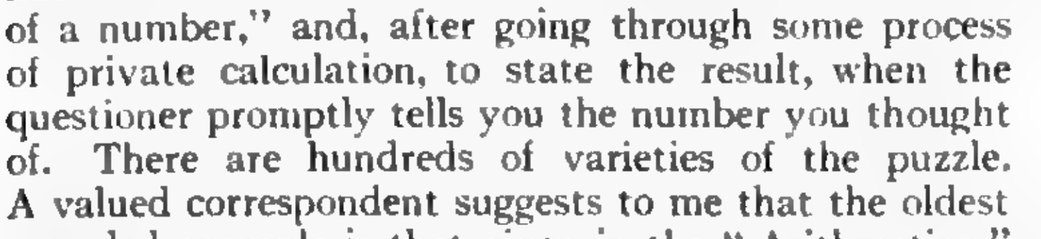
THIS position occurs in a Chess story by W. A. Ballantine, published in 1878. As a matter of fact, I believe the problems introduced into the tale were the inventions of the late Sam Loyd. The example given is not really difficult, but the subtle strategy used to force the checkmate in only four moves will be found very pleasing to the solver.

594.—THE FIRST "BOOMERANG" PUZZLE.

ONE of the most ancient forms of arithmetical puzzle is that which I call the "Boomerang." Everybody has been asked at some time or another to "Think of a number," and, after going through some process of private calculation, to state the result, when the questioner promptly tells you the number you thought of. There are hundreds of varieties of the puzzle. A valued correspondent suggests to me that the oldest recorded example is that given in the "Arithmetica" of Nicomachus, who died about the year 120. He tells you to think of any whole number between 1 and 100, and then divide it successively by 3, 5, and 7, telling him the remainder in each case. On receiving this information he promptly discloses the number you thought of. Can the reader discover a simple method of mentally performing this feat? If not, he will perhaps be interested in seeing how the ancient mathematician did it.

595.—THE FIVE CARDS.

I HAVE five cards bearing the figures 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9. How can I arrange them in a row so that the number formed by the first pair multiplied by the number formed by the last pair, with the central number



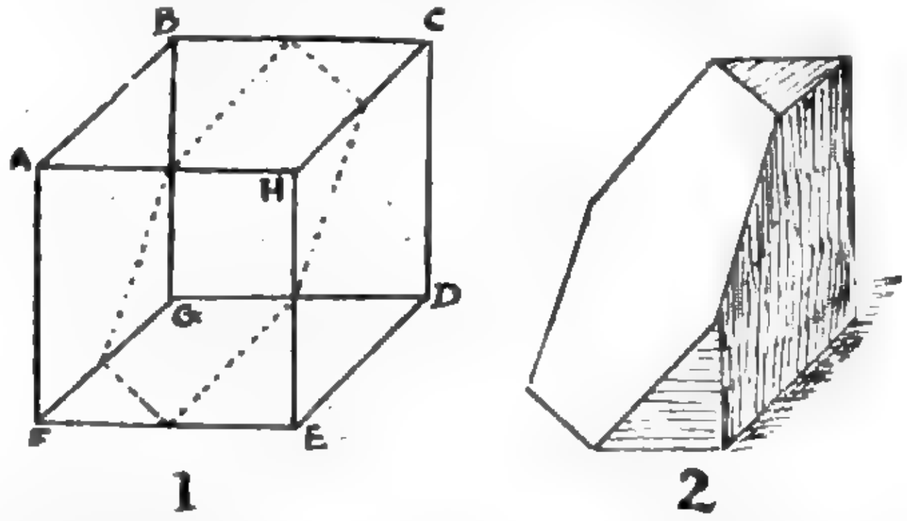
subtracted, will produce a number composed of repetitions of one figure? Thus, in the example I have shown, 31 multiplied by 79 and 5 subtracted will produce 2 4 4 4, which would have been all right if that 2 had happened to be another 4. Of course, there must be two solutions, for the pairs are clearly interchangeable

596.—A CHARADE.

'TWAS dinner-time; and on my *whole*
Some *second* had been laid.
My *first*, for her religion's sake,
Regretted that she could not take
My *last*, she smiling said.

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

588.—CUTTING THE CHEESE.



MARK the mid points in B C, C H, H E, E F, F G, and G B. Then insert the knife at the top and follow the direction indicated by the dotted plane. Then the two surfaces will each be a perfect hexagon, and the piece on the right will, in perspective, resemble Fig. 2.

589.—A CRITICAL VOTE.

THERE must have been 207 voters in all. At first 115 voted for the motion and 92 against, the majority of 23 being just a quarter of 92. But when the 12 who could not sit down were transferred to the other side, 103 voted for the motion and 104 against. So it was defeated by one vote.

590.—ANCIENT "FOX AND GEESE."

THE Geese, if skilfully played, should always win. Strutt says that he had been told that certain players had introduced a second Fox to try to equalize matters, but the exact conditions of this variation are not known.

591.—AN OLD ENIGMA.

A.D.—A.M., ADAM, A dam, A damson, A dam.

592.—AN EXCEPTIONAL NUMBER.

1 3 4 5 2. The successive numbers are 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 13 multiplied by 4 equals 52.

580.—EXPLORING MOUNT NEVEREST.

A LARGE number of attempted solutions was received. About twenty succeeded in correctly reducing the number of days to 23½. The majority were a long way out. A few claims were made for fewer than 23½ days, but they were all based on tricks that were actually, or in spirit, forbidden, such as dumping only portions of the sealed boxes, making the man take a long march fasting, or making him eat his day's ration before starting, so as to carry and dump two rations. In the last case he would really be carrying three rations, one inside and two on his back! The straight march across desert can be reduced to 86 days.

The "Shunting Problem" in our December article can be solved in fourteen moves if we start with the other engine and adopt the same method of procedure.

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"WE'RE READY, YOU KNOW," REMINDED CALEB.
"ALL RIGHT." THE GIRL PULLED HERSELF TOGETHER. "I'LL SAY, 'ONE, TWO, THREE, AND OFF!'"

(See page 380.)

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MUSTARD-POT—HOME-SICK

BY

GILBERT FRANKAU

ILLUSTRATED BY GILBERT HOLIDAY

I.

THE Victor Lomondhams of this world—your gay, galloping, gee-come-up, go-hell-for-ginger gentlemen of the scarlet frock-coats, the silky top-hats, and the silky six-hundred-pound thoroughbreds—may know a certain amount about the sport and practice of fox-hunting; but, as a general rule, they know precious little about the other inhabitants of that particular section of the English country-side which hunting-folk reverentially refer to as "The Shires": it being a far cry from Lomondham Hall to the draughty "refreshment-room" at the south-east corner of Killton Parbury market-place, whither—while the "Middle Whites" squeal out their porcine lungs and the pale-faced "Herefords" low after their red and muzzled calves—"old" Farmer Thompson of Saxenham Village betakes himself for a "lemon-and-dash" or a "small port" with "young" Farmer Starbuck of Little Overdine. Nevertheless, a certain mental similarity, a peculiar leap-and-be-damned recklessness (call it, for want of better term, the "sporting instinct"), hides alike under Sir Victor Lomondham's silky topper and under the curly-brimmed "billycock" which on fox-hunting occasions covers the shrewd head of Caleb Starbuck. In proof whereof—and of various other facts not entirely complimentary to the sex of the grey mare, his grazing companion—my friend Mustard-Pot gave me the outlines of the tale which follows.

II.

"I WISH to goodness you'd leave off *nagging*, dad. If I don't want to marry either of them, I *sha'n't* marry either of them. And if I want to marry someone else——"

"Now you be quiet, girl."

"I won't be quiet, dad." Polly Belton, admittedly the best-looking young woman in Lomondham, and reputedly the biggest flirt between Coppingham and Killton Parbury, bit off the rest of her retort just as Maud, the maid-of-all-work, in black gown and white apron, came bustling to clear the farmhouse tea. And even after Maud had gone out, she kept silence—her square teeth hard on her squared under-lip.

Impartially surveying his last unmarried daughter, his newly-furnished parlour, the lace curtains on the low latticed windows, and the unblinking incandescent gas above the plush tablecloth, Wren Belton allowed himself the luxury of a little self-congratulation. It wasn't so bad—he thought, dry-shaving his plump chin with one hard hand—to start life on fourpence-a-day wages and attain, at the age of sixty, to the ownership of three hundred good grazing acres, the house, outbuildings, and beasts thereon, a few thousand quid in the Bank, three prosperous farmer sons-in-law—and Polly. At which last thought, Wren Belton's keen old eyes ceased their self-congratulatory inspection of the parlour, and concentrated on the girl.

"Stubborn!" he said to himself. "That's what she is. Tricky, too. Never quite know what she's up to." All the same, Polly—like the gas, the plush tablecloth, and the lace curtains—represented something to be proud of. *She* didn't look the daughter of a man who'd started life on fourpence a day. Not she! in her smart brown tailored frock, with her fair hair done "smooth as smooth," and her slim, unroughened hands "all attended to." Not she! with her blue eyes and her pointed nose and the way of speaking they'd "learned her" in Rorkton.

"What time are you going to be home from the meeting, dad?" Polly's voice—not quite so aristocratic in *timbre* as Wren Belton imagined it—interrupted her father's ruminations.

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"Eleven o'clock, I should say. And I'll have to be off now. You'd better keep Cale and Sid till I get back; there's one or two things I want to talk with them about——"

"Cale and Sid?" The girl's blue eyes panicked. "*They* aren't coming over, are they?"

"Surely." Wren Belton grinned. "I met 'em both in Killton this morning."

"You *invited* them?"

"No." Wren grinned again. "They invited themselves. At least, when Cale asked if he could come, Sid said he might be this way—he's got a new nag he wants to show you."

"By moonlight, I suppose?" Polly, masking her annoyance—for that Caleb Starbuck and Sid Harrison should have chosen to spend this evening, of all evenings in the Christian era, at Lomondham Farm, was so desperately annoying, so far, far worse than merely "annoying," that she could cheerfully have bitten her father's head off—helped the old man to find his hat, hustled him along the passage, through the kitchen, across the yard, and into the trap which one of the men had lit-up and harnessed-up before going off, without uttering another syllable.

And the Polly Belton who, returning to the house, made ready to receive her self-invited guests continued preternaturally silent. She arranged for cold supper to be served, Shire-fashion, at nine o'clock; she arranged a whisky-decanter, two siphons of soda-water, a bottle of port, and six glasses on the walnut sideboard; she arranged her fair hair so that it curled either side her fair temples; and wondered, vaguely, how on earth she was going to arrange various other things of far greater importance.

MEANWHILE Sid Harrison and Caleb Starbuck, having met quite fortuitously at the Saxenham-Overdine cross-roads, trotted on together under the April moon; stopped for "just one" at the Lomondham Arms; clattered through the cobbled yard; stabled their nags by match-light in the best of Wren Belton's outbuildings; and so arrived.

Rising to welcome the pair, Polly Belton was aware that their meeting on the road had not improved their tempers. She noticed, shaking hands with Caleb, that the genial red orb of clean-shaven face which topped his six-foot-one of tweed-trousered gianthood inclined to sag at the mouth-corners, and that his eyes—usually the clearest darkest indigo—showed almost black under the up-curved brown of the eyebrows. She said, "Hallo, Cale. Take a drink if you're thirsty"; and turned to shake hands with Sid.

Sid—she judged—must have got the worst of whatever spat had taken place. The little flaxen-haired fellow in the well-cut breeches, the high brown field-boots, the red waistcoat, grey jacket, and peacock-blue tie seemed all of a quiver. His tiny moustache bristled above his rabbity mouth. His grey eyes glinted furiously. His little bony hands—as he splashed the soda into his glass—trembled with suppressed annoyance.

"Supper's not ready," she announced, seating herself by the fire. "And it won't be much of a supper when it is ready. Dad's out, and won't be back till eleven." And she added, "Have you two men been quarrelling again?"

"Quarrelling?" Caleb brought his drink to the plush-covered table; lit his pipe, and straddled a chair. "I haven't been quarrelling. I only said——"

"Oh, shut up, Cale!" Sid Harrison took a seat at the opposite end of the table; and glowered at his friend.

"It wasn't about me, I hope?" asked the provocative Polly, who knew herself perfectly well, whatever the ostensible trouble might be, for its underlying cause.

"No, it wasn't!" snapped the little man. "It wasn't about you at all. Though you're certainly pretty enough to quarrel about."

Polly, forgetful of the expensive school at Rorkton, snapped back a terse, "Aw! Don't be soft, Sid"; Caleb emitted a guffaw at his rival's discomfiture; and conversation languished, till revived by Harrison, who said:—

"Did the dad tell you I'd bought a new horse?"

"Horse!" Caleb guffawed again. "Call that big screw a horse? Giraffe, more likely."

"Better horse than any you'll ever have," interjected Sid, draining his glass.

"Giraffe," repeated Cale, who was not varied in repartee. "Wouldn't give you six quid for him."

"Didn't ask you to, did I?"

"He couldn't gallop a mile."

"That's what you think—he's better than your old brood-mare."

"Brood-mare!"

They spatted furiously for several minutes; and the girl—a strange look, a look that betokened the dawn of an idea, in her blue eyes—listened to them. Finally she rose from her chair; removed the empty tumblers, set port and port-glasses between the disputants, and poured out.

Now, it is a curious psychological fact that the good grape of Oporto, especially when tossed off at a gulp by meat-fed men of the open air, reacts—unlike that artificial product of the grain called "whisky"—almost on the instant of its imbibing. And this psychological fact grew abundantly clear to Polly Belton as—sipping delicately at her

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own one glass—she watched the effects of their three-a-piece on Sid and Caleb.

Watching, she could almost see their mentalities react to the ruby stimulus. Their eyes—Caleb's warm indigo and Sid's cold grey—spoke the unmistakable language of rustic courtship. Each, in his own dumb clumsy way, was trying to express the same sentiments: "Look here, Polly, old girl—be a sport—you've kept me hanging about long enough—let's get married and have done with it." Also—and this came home with some force to her vanity—it appeared to the girl as though the pre-port hostility of the two friends had almost disappeared. Sid—she opined—would resign her to Caleb as complacently as Caleb would give her up to Sid. All they really wanted was that she should "be a sport"; that she should let them know once and for all whether she would rather queen it over the stone Starbuck farm-house in the village street of Saxenham or the red-brick Harrison farm-house on the slopes beyond Killton Parbury.

That she, Polly Belton, might be undecided about the housing problem, might even have other plans for self-disposal, had not apparently occurred to either of the two men—whose labial conversation, as distinct from the private conversations they were carrying on with their eyes—had now veered once again to the eternal subject of horse.

"You take it from me," pronounced Sid, "when it comes to steeplechasing, never back horses—back jockeys."

"Aw, jockeys!" Caleb finished that third glass. "Jockeys can't make bad horses win."

"They can make good horses lose, though." And Sid Harrison plunged into one of those interminable racing yarns which begin: "Well, now, talking of that," and never end up at all. "A light-weight like myself," announced the little man in the middle of his yarn, "a man that doesn't ride over nine stone six——"

Caleb, looking at Polly as though to say, "And that's about all he *does* weigh, in case you're thinking you'd prefer him to me," interrupted with a snort.

"Weight's nothing," snorted Caleb. "Now, I ride over twelve stone, and what I say is that if—mind you, I'm only saying if—if you and me was jockeys why I'd back myself against you across any country you like for any money you like."

"Oh, you would, would you?" interrupted Harrison—and *he* looked at Polly as though to say: "Neat, that's me. I don't go in for size—but I'm nippy—a nippy sort of chap all round."

At this point, Polly Belton began to laugh. At first, the laugh was purely intimate—the kind of private smile which attends a sudden and a heaven-sent thought. But as Cale and Sid continued their public argument and their covert glances, the laugh grew to a slow, silent grin which dimpled her fire-flushed cheeks; and from a silent grin to a swift and an audible chuckle.

"What's the joke, Polly?" asked Cale.

"What are you laughing about?" asked Sid.

"Only about you men." The girl rose to her feet and whipped the port-glasses off the table. "You're all funny—that's what you are. Like children! Always quarrelling! First you quarrel about your horses; then you quarrel about your riding. I wonder what you'll quarrel about next—your girls, I expect."

SHE made as if to go; but Caleb—rising bulkily from his chair—restrained her.

"I'm not quarrelsome," began Caleb, flushing to the eyebrows, "and I haven't got another girl."

"No more have I." Sid, too, jumped up. "And you know that perfectly well, Polly. Except for you——"

"Me!" Wren Belton's daughter turned on the pair of them. "I'm not your girl, Sid. Nor yours either, Cale." And she added—that one ruby glasslet stimulating her to unwonted genius: "Let me go and get supper. I'm fed-up with the pair of you—sitting here boasting about your cheap nags and your rotten old riding. Racing!" She snapped the words in Caleb's face. "Fancy a man like you talking about racing! A fine jockey you'd make, wouldn't you? While as for you, Sid"—that "Sid" might have been the lack-lash of a hunting thong—"everybody from here to Halifax knows that Sid'll ride three miles to a gate rather than jump a couple of ditches."

For a full half-minute there intervened between the three of them a tense and uncomfortable silence; broken at long last by the simultaneous fury of Caleb's "I'd make a better jock than *you* think," and Sid's "So that's your opinion of my riding, is it?"

Followed another silence. Then Caleb rampaged: "And what's more, if you don't believe me, I'll race Sid here, or any other man, Tom Sampey included, from Lomondham to Coppingham and back—fair point-to-point riding—for any stake you care to name"; and Sid Harrison spluttered vindictively: "I'll lay you twenty pound to ten, Caleb, that my rotten cheap nag, as Polly calls her, would beat your old cart-horse over that course or any other."

Whereupon Polly Belton said, sweetly: "Well, you can't ride to Coppingham and back at this time of night," and left the rest in the hands of Fate.

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Fate, as usual, favoured the boldest gambler. "I'll take your bet," snapped Cale to Sid; "and what's more, I'll race you now."

"Now?"

"Yes. Why not? There's a moon, isn't there?"

Under normal circumstances Sid, who was a cautious little fellow, no fonder of risking his neck than the next man, would have temporized; but it seemed to him—looking swiftly from Polly to his rival, and from his rival back to Polly—that the girl's eyes held a promise. It was as though her eyes said, "Look here—you want me to be a sport. Well, I'm being a sport. You beat Cale—and I'll be Mrs. Harrison."

Wherefore Sid Harrison, of Killton Parbury, with a twirl of his infinitesimal moustache, announced: "Done with you!" picked up his hat and hunting-crop, and marched for the door.

III.

THEY came—Cale boastful, Sid thoughtfully, and Polly Machiavellian, with the hurricane-lamp—across the cobbled yard into the outbuilding. Here, tethered casually among the horned Welsh cattle, stood two saddle-horses: Cale's Lazybird, a vast brown quadruped, with a mouth like iron, the forehand of a thoroughbred, the croup of a Clydesdale stallion, and hocks which, had she belonged to anyone but a sporting farmer with sporting farmer's luck, would have broken down long before she dropped the first of her three foals; and Sid Harrison's newest acquisition, whom Polly, as soon as the lamp-beams revealed him to her astonished eyes, christened "The Yellow Peril."

"Call him what you like," retorted the little man; "if he can't beat that old cart-horse of Cale's I'm a Dutchman. Of course," hedging, "he must have been lying out all winter. I mean, he's not exactly in hard condition. Been pined, I expect."

"Pined!" Polly, treading daintily over the cow-litter, made a closer inspection of the steed. "I should say so." Then, curiously: "Sid, where do you think he was bred?"

"Foreigner—by the look of him."

And indeed "foreign" was the only description which seemed to fit the bizarre animal who—as though conscious of being under discussion—lifted a disdainful head to glance at his new master. This strange animal's coat, shaggy as a bear's, was neither grey nor roan nor chestnut, but—even as Polly said—yellow; the dirty, discoloured yellow of a butter-pat dropped in mud. His condition—though the shagginess served to conceal the worst of the hollows at neck and rib—revealed itself as starvation poor. His points, in that uncertain light, the most expert coper might have been forgiven for misjudging. But of his height at the shoulder—even in pitch-darkness—there could have been neither doubt nor misjudgment. For The Yellow Peril, to use Sid's own expression, "made a sixteen-hand horse look like a Shetland pony."

"Yes—he's foreign all right." Caleb, busy untethering his Lazybird, guffawed across the stalls. "Yankee circus-horse, I should say. P'r'aps he'll lie down for Sid to get mounted."

This gibe enraged Cale's opponent, and he, too, began untethering—a somewhat complicated process, as The Yellow Peril, in addition to a double bridle all of whose four uncleaned reins had parted and been repaired in various unexpected places, carried a cat's-cradle arrangement of string, wire, and leather which might, at some period of its career, have been a headstall, and, attached to the headstall, a frayed head-rope. These disentangled and more or less adjusted, Sid tightened a mildewy leather girth, and coaxed his steed into the yard—Caleb, whose saddlery, if old, was perfectly presentable, following at leisure.

Now, although a good car does the journey, *viâ* Rorkton, in fifteen easy-running minutes, a straight gallop from Lomondham Village to Coppingham Town, even in broad daylight with hounds giving tongue ahead, is no child's play; for between the two—its one side steep as the Grand Canyon and its other wooded as the forest of Dunsinane—lies the Vale of Screever. Polly, watching Caleb swing to saddle, thought of that Vale misgivingly. "Perhaps I oughtn't to let them," she thought. "Men are such asses. Supposing one of them breaks his neck!" But to interfere at this late stage of the proceedings, quite apart from one's personal interest in their continuance, seemed "soft"—as "soft" as these two amateur jockeys.

"Come on, Sid," said Caleb Starbuck, kicking at Lazybird's huge sides and hanging on to Lazybird's iron mouth till she danced like a skittish old woman on the yard cobbles.

"Half a minute, Cale." The little man, his natty felt hat barely showing above The Yellow Peril's withers, was letting his near stirrup-leather out to the last hole as a preliminary to climbing aboard; and The Yellow Peril, utterly uninterested in the proceedings, was nuzzling at Polly's shoulder. "Half a minute! Which way are we going?"

"Dunno which way *you're* going"—Caleb made for the yard gates and leaned forward to open them with his ashplant—"but I'm going the shortest—through Big Field, over

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As soon as the lamp-beams revealed Sid's newest acquisition to her astonished eyes, Polly christened him "The Yellow Peril."

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the brook, down Love Lane, and then across country. When I get to Coppingham I'll stop at the Crown for exactly five minutes. If *you're* there, we'll have one before we start back. If I've gone when you arrive, you wait your five minutes, same as me." And to Polly, "That's fair enough, isn't it?"

"Fair enough, if you start level," retorted Polly, watching Sid's vain efforts to find the lowered iron with uplifted foot.

"Aw, I'll wait for him," guffawed Caleb; and he looked down at the girl's face, palely attractive in moonlight, thinking, "I don't believe she cares which of us wins."

Meanwhile Sid, despairing of orthodox horsemanship, had coaxed his steed alongside the kitchen steps, and thence, with a gallant spring, mounted him. As his rival's ashplant swung the yard gates wide he, too, looking at Polly Belton, speculated whether that very aloof young woman really cared which of her suitors won this midnight steeplechase.

"Rum go altogether," mused Sid Harrison through the ruby mists of the port. "Can't remember for the life of me whether she promised the winner anything or not. Suppose she must have. Otherwise Cale wouldn't be so keen on the business." Whereupon, having readjusted his near iron, he bunched his reins, ejaculated "Come up, old skeleton," to the reluctant Peril, "You start us, Polly," to the girl, and followed Caleb on to the road.

For the last time, as she stood by the yard gates of her father's farm, the two horsemen moonlit in front of her and the outbuildings shadowy behind, Polly Belton's heart knew misgivings for the issue of the night. Lazybird, she felt, could be trusted, unless Caleb did something more than ordinarily reckless, not to give him a fall. But the look of Sid's new purchase frightened her. Perched on that titanic skeleton, Sid might have been a child. She imagined the horse bolting with him; imagined the little man shot headlong over those huge ears.

Not that there was anything to warrant the idea of bolting in Yellow Peril's demeanour. Lazybird fidgeted a little—her head being set as though for home; but the other might have been some enormous sheep.

"We're ready, you know," reminded Caleb.

"All right." The girl pulled herself together. "I'll say: One, two, three, and Off."

"Never mind the One, two, three," retorted Sid. "Just you say 'Off,' and off we'll go."

He hitched himself comfortable in his ancient saddle and waited, his crop in the air, his eyes on Polly's lips.

"Off!" called those lips; and even as he brought his crop down with a welt on the yellow steed's ribs Sid was aware of Caleb shooting by at full gallop down the hard high road.

Polly Belton listened till muffled hoof-beats told her the pair were off the road, through the open gate, and into Big Field. Then she listened again, and, hearing a far honk-honk on the Rorkton road, dashed quick as lightning back into the farm, across the kitchen, and upstairs to her own bedroom.

IV.

NEITHER Lazybird nor the Peril (who, in after years, became known from one end of the Shires to the other as "Vic Lomondham's Mustard-Pot") had the slightest intention, as they cantered head-to-head over Big Field's moonlit ridge-and-furrow, of racing. In vain Caleb's ashplant beat at the mare; in vain Sid's hunting-crop beat at the horse. Half-way down the field both mended their paces; but the paces kept them level. Moreover, possibly because the night air had cooled their jockeys' ardour, the path they took did not lead them to the dangerous—though jumpable—Lomondham Brook, but to the perfectly safe Lomondham Ford, through which, slowing to a jig-jog, they splashed side by side.

Beyond the ford, however, sport improved, Caleb making for a remembered hedge-gap into Love Lane, which Lazybird, despite her curious hocks, jumped big enough; and Sid, who followed over, losing four lengths and both stirrups by reason of The Peril's casual taking of the unseen ditch on the far side.

"Come up, you brute!" muttered Sid Harrison, regaining his irons; and the brute, as though to indicate what he could do if he made up his mind, abolished those four lost lengths in as many seconds.

Side by side once more, and very nearly at a gallop—for Lazybird, not to be outdone, had answered The Peril's spurt—Polly's suitors travelled Love Lane. Moon-light and moon-shadows fretted the known hedgerows and the grass-going between to a pathway of romance. Caleb's sporting blood warmed with every stride of the mare. He whooped to her as he rode, "Forrard on, forrard on, my beauty." But Sid Harrison's cold blood was perpending topography.

They came to the end of the lane, and Caleb, still whooping, took the North road and the low hedge beyond the North road in style. Looking back, he saw that Sid had not followed him over; and knew instinctively the plan in Sid's mind. "He's making for the bridle-road," thought Caleb. "Two mile farther to go and six gates to open. If I don't take a toss, I've got him

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whacked." Lazybird shied as a lame ewe panicked after her twin lamblets, and put on pace on towards the brow of the Vale.

Meantime, The Peril, resenting their separation, gave one vicious jerk at his rusty bit and set off up the grass which fringes the Great North Road at a speed that gave his unsuspecting jockey more than a hope of victory. "Old Skeleton can gallop on if he wants to," thought Sid Harrison.

By now his blood, too, was warming up. George Somers, the Rorkton pork-butcher, flashed by in his new Ford; there was a girl in the Ford; and Sid, shouting, "Why don't you kiss her, George?" gave The Peril another welt with his crop. The Peril quickened again; and Sid Harrison, swaying as he sat, discovered that he must have readjusted his near iron a hole too short. "Whoa, will you!" he demanded. "Whoa, you fool!"

SOME three hundred yards after the giving of that command Mustard-Pot —to resume his rightful name—thought fit to obey it. The grip on his bit loosening as Sid fiddled with the buckle, he dropped his head and tore a mouthful of grass from the roadside. Munching that grass, a far sound cocked his saffron ears.

Sid Harrison, his leather adjusted to his liking, prepared to resume the course. Sixty yards away the pale-blue concave mirror of the tarmac veered left from the first gate of the bridle-road. Through that gate, Sid knew, the way dropped slanting to the right for a fair half-mile. He gathered up his reins, trotted Mustard-Pot to the gateway, clicked the handle open with his crop, nipped through, and, halting for a moment to make sure that the gate should swing to behind him, cast one quick glance at the landscape.

At his right shoulder rode the full moon. Directly below him the ground fell almost sheer from the slanting bridle-track to where Screever Village hid behind a screen of trees. Beyond Screever Village the far slope uprose, darkly wooded, to a luminous skyline. Vaguely on that skyline the little man discerned the spire of Coppingham Church, and to the left of that church spire a patch of mysterious lemon-coloured radiance. For the fraction of a second Sid speculated about that mysterious radiance; then, as the faint drone of merry-go-round music caught his attention, he remembered that it was the last night of Coppingham Fair.

There followed on that trivial recollection —so swiftly that all the happenings seemed one—the metallic click of the gate-handle, a twitching of Mustard-Pot's ears, an upward jerk of Mustard-Pot's head, a snort of delight from Mustard-Pot's nostrils, a wrench that snapped the off curb-rein between Sid Harrison's fingers, a joyous buck-jump that revealed a foot of moonlight under Sid Harrison's seat, and a plunging leap down the bridle-road that landed the seat in question slightly forward of the saddle-peak.

How Sid Harrison got back into the saddle, Sid Harrison never knew. He realized only that there was a gate ahead; and that, before they made it, this lunatic of a horse must be stopped. But by the time he felt his knees once more against the saddle-flaps, the half-mile had become a quarter; and by the time that, wrenching frantically at the off-reins to turn Mustard-Pot's outstretched neck uphill and out of danger, he had discovered the curb out of action, the five rails of the gate showed white as Sid's face against the darkness beyond.

He was too frightened to curse. What strength he had ebbed down into his legs. His legs dared not quit the saddle-flaps. They clung, as the hands of a maniac cling, to their one hope of safety. "God save us," thought the owner of those clinging legs.

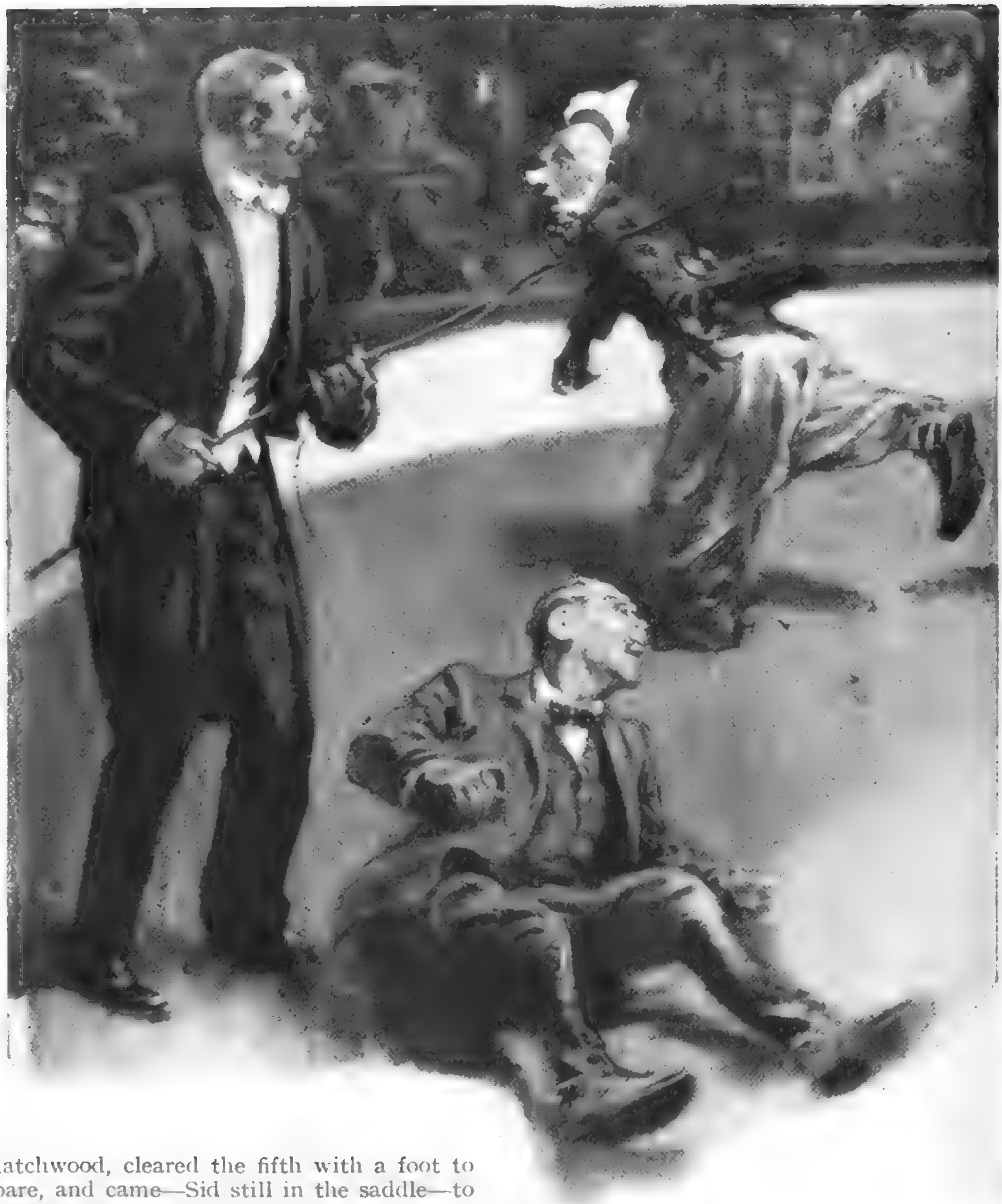
The night air, whipping past, stung cold as sleet. Vaguely, he knew himself fifty yards from the gate—forty yards—twenty. Then, suddenly, he felt the pace check; felt Mustard-Pot balance himself in mid-gallop; saw the moon diving earthwards as Mustard-Pot leaped for it; heard, miles below him, a sharp rap of steel on wood; and realized, deliriously, that Mustard-Pot had landed safely and was galloping on.

Beasts, great humps of horned velvet, were cud-chewing on the far side of the gate. One of them lay right across the bridle-road. Mustard-Pot took that supine beast in his stride. "Whoa," shrieked Mustard-Pot's jockey. But the near snaffle-rein snapped at the ring as Sid Harrison yanked on it; and now the horse had its way with the man.

At the second gate, the man's hunting-crop whizzed from his hand; at the third, his neat felt hat sailed splendidly from his head. The broken reins flapped through his fingers. He knew himself utterly powerless. He wanted to fling himself off; dared not. Somehow, he re-bunched the fragmentary reins, and a knotty something which instinct informed him must be the loosened head-rope, in his bridle-hand. His right, backward-reaching, felt for and fastened on the cantle. For now the road veered sharply down the Vale; and Mustard-Pot's four hoofs seemed to leave the ground with every stride.

Under those hoofs, stones fusilladed. Sparks leaped from them. Their thunder was the thunder of a battery at gun-fire. Soon they found turf; and the turf flew high as a cavalryman's plume behind them. They splintered the top-bar of the fourth gate to

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matchwood, cleared the fifth with a foot to spare, and came—Sid still in the saddle—to the last and the worst of the six.

It was through the bullfinch by that gate that the astonished Caleb, taking it easy down a field sheer as the walls of Screever Castle, saw an enormous yellow head followed by an enormous yellow body, atop of which something monkey-like lay almost prone, outshoot into the moonlight, shake itself and stand—for just so long as it takes equine ears to catch the drone of a steam calliope—stock-still.

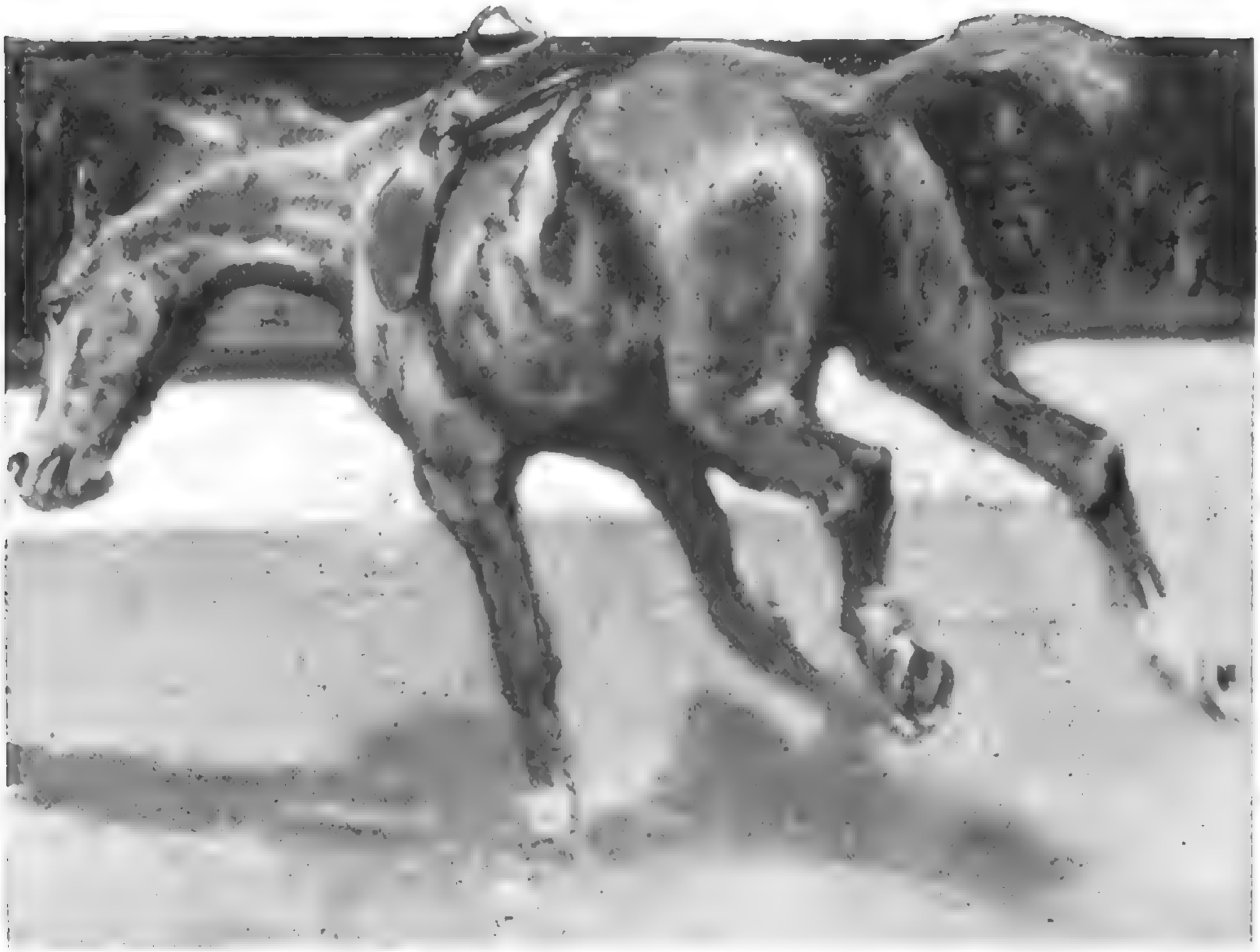
"Cale!" gasped the monkey-like something. "Cale! He's broke his reins—stop him!"

"'Ere! what's this? What the devil's this?" said the clown, seeing Mustard-Pot ambling frantically after him, his teeth bared for the seat of his pants. Sid had come to no harm. He lay under a blaze of lights on a bed of trampled sawdust.

But already, with another snort of delight, a snort that struck terror to the heart of the little man on his back, Mustard-Pot was off

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again. Caleb, who had half-turned Lazybird at the gasped appeal, saw the pair bound past him over the moleheaved turf, and waited—as folk wait on imminent catastrophes—for the sickening crash of their downfall.

No such crash came—only the thudding of hoofs on turf, and, very clearly above the thudding, a mechanical drone of old-time music. "Bill Baily," droned the music, "Bill Baily, won't you *please* come home."

Caleb turned the mare's head downhill and did his best to proceed gingerly. Ahead and below, almost at bottom of the field, he could see the saffron horse tearing maniacally for Screever Village. Lazybird, too, saw that horse; and, her blood thrilling at the sight of him, raked with her iron mouth at the nickel bit. "Steady, old thing," counselled Caleb, as she broke to a trot; and then, suddenly wise to the possibilities of Mustard-Pot, "Hang it, we're not going to be beaten."

Down the last slope of that field Lazybird and her rider went like an avalanche. In the moonlight, Cale's eyes were polished jet. He had forgotten his wager, Polly, the Crown at Coppingham, Sid's danger, his quarrel with Sid—forgotten everything except the one fact that he must overtake the horse and the horseman ahead. Wherefore, "Yooi over," whooped Caleb, as his mare, sliding on her tail for the last twenty yards, made the timber at field-bottom and blundered smashing through; and "Forrard away" howled Caleb, as his mare scattered the new-sown seed-beds of Screever allotments behind her ill-shod hoofs; and "Yooicks, yooicks, yooicks—tally-ho," screamed Caleb as, ash-planting his mare over a low cut-and-laid, through a plantation, and on to the main road, he caught a glimpse of Mustard-Pot galloping like the Devil untied up the one and only street of Screever Village.

Sid Harrison—at that particular moment—didn't know whether he was in Screever or in Mesopotamia. He was conscious only of windows—two long blurs of lighted windows which flashed past his either eye like express-trains; of these, and of his two hands, his right gripping the cantle and his left a combined bunch of flapping tackle, which miraculously included the saddle-peak. Then the two express-trains vanished; a mad moon played hide-and-seek with a mad church-tower; something tugged at the tackle-bunch; various things broke; the fingers of his left hand unclosed; a raffle of steel and leather which might have been a double-bridle hit the road with a clink as Mustard-Pot released himself from the last of his head-gear; a hedge fled under; and trees, large trees most horribly alive, whipped at Sid's face with their thong-like twigs.

Caleb Starbuck took that particular hedge,

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the hedge into Screever Coverts, with his heart between his teeth; and nearly bit his heart in two when Lazybird, pecking, dabbed her nose among last year's leaves and staggered to an even keel by the sheerest miracle. Galloping on, up the narrowest of overgrown rides, he wondered vaguely why Sid hadn't been killed, whither Sid's horse could be taking them, and whether—when, if ever, they got there—Sid and his horse would still be in each other's company. Then the ride opened out, and he saw them again. "Wonder what that animal could do if he had a bit of corn in him, and a rider on his back," thought the perspiring Starbuck.

For Mustard-Pot, though his unclipped coat was sodden, still went strong. Uphill he went, wheeling from ride to ride, his ears cocked, his flag waving, the whole equine heart of him in his eyes. Uphill beyond the trees, two miles, a mile and a half, a mile away—Mustard-Pot knew—were lights and music and a man. A man with a red-and-white face who carried fruit in his pockets!

V.

CALEB STARBUCK, peering down the ride over Lazybird's ears, was aware of an open bridle-gate, and beyond the bridle-gate of rolling fields across which a phantom horse with a phantom rider hared desperately towards a blur of lights. "Hang it all!" muttered Caleb Starbuck. "Hang it all, I won't be beaten!" He flogged once at the mare; and the mare, grunting, spurted. The phantom horse came back to them. Back and back under the moon. They smashed through a low fence and saw him—a hundred yards ahead—still carrying his jockey gallantly. 'He's tiring, though," thought Caleb. For a moment a false crest hid both horse and light blur from his view; then, topping the crest, he knew the blur of light for a blaze—for the blaze of Coppingham Fair.

Caleb, gathering Lazybird between his knees, could hear the loud and brazen grinding of the steam calliope. The calliope stopped. He heard the shouts of the merry-makers and the shots from the shooting galleries. Once more he thwacked Lazybird's flanks with his ashplant. Now he could see, a field away, the swing-boats rising and falling and the riders on the merry-go-round jerking fantastically to standstill on their fantastic steeds, and above them, balloon-like, the huge lit canvas top of the circus tent.

But Caleb's ears were not for the shouts of the merrymakers; Caleb's eyes were not for the swing-boats. His rival, his rival for the hand and the heart of Polly Belton, was well in view and just in earshot. "Sid," shouted Caleb, "Sid—I'll beat you yet!" And at the shout actuality returned to the dazed mind of Sidney Harrison, so that for a second he, too, remembered Polly.

He was still on his horse, on this devilskin of a bolting horse, bought for fifteen quid at the Leicester Repository, which Polly had christened The Yellow Peril. The horse had neither bridle, head-collar, nor head-rope; but he had a mane. Sid's bridle-hand abandoned the saddle-peak and grasped a lock of that yellow mane. He leaned forward. He shouted to his tiring steed, 'Bolt—I'll teach you to bolt!" and drove hard with his heels at the sodden flanks.

The answer to that heel-drive nearly flung Sid over Mustard-Pot's ears. Only his right hand, still tenacious on the cantle, saved him; and, as his dazed eyes took in his whereabouts, he wished, devoutly, that the girth had parted and let him down. For The Peril—so it seemed to Sid—had bolted again; and the canvases, the coco-nut shies, the lights, and the matchboard railings of Coppingham Fair lay straight across his path.

Even as Sid's mind fully realized this horror, Lazybird drew level; Caleb shouted, "Pull up, you fool!" and the steam calliope burst hooting to melody. "Let 'em all come!" hooted the calliope; "let 'em all come marching round to me."

And they came—Lazybird, startled out of her equine wits by the blast of sound, rearing and plunging against Caleb's curb-tugs; Mustard-Pot, unbridled, unaffrighted his great hocks working like pistons, steam spurting from his outstretched nostrils, his lean neck straight as a gun-barrel and his eyeballs gleaming at the sight of home—came like lunatics, came like a cavalry charge, came like thunderbolts into Coppingham Fair-ground.

The rest was chaos—a chaos of splintering matchboard and splitting canvas, of over-turning booths and shrieking flappers, of breaking bottles and clanging pans and cursing hobbledehoys, of stampeding pony-traps and stampeding motor-drivers; a mad, unimagined, unimaginable chaos, through which, like an ice-ram through surface-ice, the unaffrighted Mustard-Pot bored his devastating way; while Lazybird, mad as the moon-goddess herself, came kicking and cow-kicking after—till suddenly, so suddenly that Sid Harrison's hand deserted the saviour cantle, Mustard-Pot dug both forefeet into the ground and stopped dead as mutton among a maze of tent-pegs.

Caleb, wrenching Lazybird at last to her haunches, saw his rival sail rocket-like beyond those enormous ears; saw his rival disappear, head first, legs following, through a screen of canvas; knew the canvas for

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side of the circus-tent; and watched, too amazed for action, while Mustard-Pot tore at the canvas with anxious teeth, and, having found the opening through which his rider had sailed for pilot, followed him in.

"Poor old Sid!" thought Caleb. "Poor old Sid! If he's come to harm, I'll never forgive myself"; and slipping from Lazybird's drooping back, he rushed headlong after Mustard Pot.

SID HARRISON, however, had come to no corporeal harm. He lay, scarcely stunned, under a blaze of lights on a bed of trampled sawdust.

That much Caleb saw in a flash; but the rest of the picture—for sweat blinded him and his thumping heart blurred comprehension—was only revealed in sections: first, a ring of astounded faces; then a man in full evening dress; then a clown, a clown with a scarlet countenance who ran for his life, shouting, "'Ere! What's this? What the devil's this?"; then Mustard-Pot, ambling frantically after the clown, his teeth bared for the seat of the clown's pants; and, lastly—which section of the picture Sid's opening optics also saw—Polly, Polly Belton, into whose front-row stall the clown leaped for his life, terrified out of her wits, her arms flung in desperation round the neck of George Somers, the pork-butcher of Rorkton.

VI.

AND at that my friend Mustard-Pot ended the tale; and cantered away leaving the grey mare, Silver Glory, to snuffle in my receptive ears: "Silly fellow! That yarn always upsets him. You see, it wasn't *his* circus, after all"—a fact subsequently confirmed to me, after the most tactful inquiries, by the neat little fair-haired, blue-eyed lady who dispenses far and wide across the Shires those pork-pies, hams, brawns, and sausages for which Rorkton is so justly famous. "Cale's wife had twins last week," admitted Mrs. Somers, blushing faintly, in answer to further questions, "and Sid's married a London girl. He was always a bit soft, was Sid."

But as to how far she actually *planned* to get rid of her unwelcome suitors on the evening when Mustard-Pot had his peculiar attack of home-sickness, Wren Belton's daughter did not enlighten me.

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 106.

(The Second of the Series.)

HE stands for England: on his day
Her greatest came and passed away.

1. The goal of those who would succeed.
2. The basis of the Moslem's creed.
3. The grip that floors you like a shot.
4. The angle mangled by the Scot.
5. The place where mummers play their parts.
6. The gift supreme in all the arts.
7. The inmate of a changeless skin.
8. The prelude to symphonic din.
9. The trappings of the royal power.
10. The magic of a witching hour.
11. The world-wide realm that joins to sing
With heart and voice: "God save the King!"

EDI.

Answers to Acrostic No. 106 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on May 10th.*

To every light one alternative answer may be sent, it should be written at the side. At the foot of his answer every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 105.

THE flowers of spring that now appear
Tell us that summer, too, is near.

1. The opposite of shallow take.
2. Good at addition is the snake.
3. Fragile and weak. One letter goes.
4. Six feet, as every schoolboy knows.
5. Protector he, in bygone day.
6. Act twice. The bird has passed away.
7. Goddess, of sunshine born and rain.
8. Length without breadth. There goes the train.
9. The clothes wherein we are arrayed
Are four—club, diamond, heart, and spade.

PAX.

1.	D	ee	P
2.	A	dde	R
3.	F	ra	I
4.	F	atho	M
5.	O	live	R
6.	D	od	O
7.	I	ri	S
8.	L	in	E
9.	S	uit	S

NOTES.—Light 3. Frail. 5. Cromwell. 7. The rainbow.

Some of the lights of No. 103 lend themselves to other answers, besides those intended by the writer. "Rosy" is accepted for the sixth, "Ice-floe" for the second, and several words for the fourth.

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THROUGH LONDON WITH THE WISH WAGON

by

Mrs C. N. Williamson

(Author of "The Lightning Conductor," etc)

A FEW weeks ago a number of authors were asked to tell in a "symposium" what was the book of their hearts, the book which perhaps they never would write, yet wished most of all to write. I knew that the book of my heart would be a book about London: old, old London, that smells of history as the Thames smells of water and river weeds. I was on a ship sailing away from London and England to New York when I wrote that answer. And thinking of London then I seemed to see the town in a subtle and vivid way, as I had never seen it before. My soul had flown back, and jumped on board a "wish wagon" which was waiting for me on the shore.

Will *you* visit London with me, to-day, in the Wish Wagon?

Once I heard a woman complain that it would take three days to "see London thoroughly," whereas she'd "done Paris in one." I sniffed snobbishly. But that was before I discovered the Wish Wagon. I sneered, because one could live in London for years and not know it: the London (or "Augusta") of the Romans and Britons, buried or sticking up in unexpected places; the London of the great kings and queens of long ago, who could, with the stamp of a royal foot, order a cathedral to be begun or a dozen noble heads to be chopped off; the London of Shakespeare; dear, spiteful Pepys's London; Dr. Johnson's dignified London; London of the dead poets, who are more alive now than we; Thackeray's London; Dickens's London; the almost uncountable Londons of yesterdays; Londons which have merged slowly, dreamily, through fog and rain and silvery sunlight into the gay and good, sad and bad, London of to-day.

Well, the Wish Wagon can show us all Londons in a day, without scamping or scampering, for, you know, it travels as fast as light.

We arrive in the morning. And we *choose* our morning. It's April—a true-to-type April, such as Browning meant when he said, "Oh, to be in England now that April's there!" In Hyde Park and far more lovable Kensington Gardens, the May trees are rose-pink and snow-white. The windows of the grand hotels, and the smart houses of Mayfair where society lives, display their flower-boxes for that well-nigh immemorial pageant, the "London season."

But suppose we flash straight to the region of the Strand, and the Embankment, and Fleet Street?

If you didn't know much about the history of London you would see, as you raced from the parks Strandward—just a moving tide of shark-like taxis, splendid motors, and huge motor-buses (whose destination you can't read because of the advertisements!), the soft haze bringing out colours with startling Leon Bakst effects. But if you *did* know history, why, you would see—well, the Tide of Life flowing; and you would thrill with the knowledge that the London whither you were bound hides more of the past, perhaps, and links more bits of history together, than does any other part of the old town.

In the Strand—a street once of palaces—shops crowd one another, and so do streams of Americans; also English actors and "actorines," hurrying where the big river hurried long ago. The Americans are all going to the Savoy, or the Cecil, or some other big hotel: and the actors and "actorines" are going to their agents. But take the Savoy Hotel, just for instance! Where it stands now and flaunts its gay awnings stood once the great palace built by Simon Montfort, Earl of Leicester (who helped England to get a Constitution); and later made more splendid by Shakespeare's "Old John of Gaunt, time-honoured Lancaster."

Fancy having your coffee and rolls only a little above the level where King John of France raged furiously as a prisoner, after the battle of Poitiers, vowing vengeance—which he never got. But that was a little

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while before France and England understood each other, wasn't it? So it's pleasanter to picture Chaucer and Froissart as guests there—not "paying guests," as some of us are now!

Seeing the Savoy on this April morning, it's almost too easy to realize how, when it was a palace, the mob "sacked" it (Wat Tyler's mob, it was), playing "careless-like" with barrels of gunpowder. I wonder if the splendid things the wild men threw into the Thames then were worth half the pearls on the pretty ladies' necks to-day?

Poor Savoy! It lay in ruins then till Henry VII. ran up a little hospital for the poor. For the poor! That might seem funny in these times, when you're paying your bill! Of course, Queen Elizabeth got hold of the place later, as she did of most places she fancied in the brave days after those dull ones spent fretting as "Princess Elizabeth" in the Tower.

As for huge Somerset House, where wills are kept, and where one argues with pale, firm men about income-tax, I think it must ever have been a somewhat bleak if splendid palace. Oliver Cromwell's body lay there in state—in a room where Henrietta Maria had once danced a "masque." Another shudder for Somerset House! To say nothing of the Roman baths and walled-in Roman bodies which were found underneath. It is quite cheering after all that to remember how Peter the Great lodged in the neighbourhood when he was in London, learning about shipyards and planning a new Russia. But he was "subject to nightmares and sweatings." He must have had a prophetic soul about his Russia! Dear old Pepys, too, lived just off the Strand, in Buckingham Street; and that wasn't far past the dazzling days of the great nobles, when three hundred watercourses ran between Palace Yard and the Old Exchange. The pavement was comparatively new in his day, for it wasn't laid till Henry VIII.'s reign; and walking in the crowded Strand now I chuckle to think how "the road-bed was broken with thickets." I suppose the only point in common between Charles Lamb and Lord Beaconsfield was that they both loved the Strand. Lamb said: "I often shed tears in the Strand for fulness of joy at so much life" (in these days the emotion isn't always *joy!*); and "Dizzy" liked it better than "any street in Europe." A curious taste—when there were Piccadilly and Pall Mall.

When Dizzy made his grandiloquent remarks about the Strand he must have had in mind also the dignified beauty of the Adelphi, in the neighbourhood of whose site (the Adelphi itself dates only from 1768) Real People have never failed to congregate, from tragic little Jane Grey, wonderful Walter Raleigh, Francis Bacon (who was born in York House), glove-selling Anne Clarges (who died Duchess of Albemarle), down—or up—through the centuries to residents of the actual Adelphi—the Adam brothers, David Garrick; now beloved Barrie, and brilliant Bernard Shaw. But, of course, it wasn't the "Adelphi" till the Adam brothers built Adelphi Terrace on the plan—or thought they did—of the Palace of Diocletian. We all know that "Adelphi" means "brothers" in Greek!

How history repeats itself in small ways as well as big! In old, old times the great ladies who had lost money or were "bored stiff" opened shops (as they do now) in the New Exchange, or "Britain's Bourse," in the near Strand, and there were awful scandals about the pretty shop-girls and the "young fops." Such touches of nature make us feel as if History were a sort of "home from home"!

But don't forget, we must pass on to St. Paul's Cathedral, just pausing at the Temple. There's "the sweetest, stillest spot in London," or so think the doves. So thought Dickens, too, and so think I. Let's cut through a few labyrinthine old rabbit-warrens and go along the Embankment for a little way. We sha'n't mind missing the Law Courts—dreary things—shall we? At the Temple we can get back into the greyness of busy Fleet Street if we choose, perhaps slipping out of silence to noise through Christopher Wren's noble gateway.

I love to recall that Dr. Johnson's beloved Fleet Street was named after the tiny, vanished river Fleet: but I don't wonder the river vanished. It would. Ah! but the Thames is beautiful, gazed on from the Embankment, and thought of from the Embankment. It isn't difficult with just a mustard-seed of imagination to picture the magnificent velvet-draped and gilded barges of Tudor and Plantagenet kings and queens: wedding barges, judicial barges, funeral barges, plying between Westminster and the Tower. This stretch of the Thames is like an artery between the brain and—no, *not* the heart! The Tower was never the heart, though Westminster was always the brain, of London. Let us say—the *spleen*. When you think of all the angry, wicked old deeds done in the Tower, it seems quite appropriate to call it London's spleen.

On a soft spring day like ours the river lies a-dream; and the wonderful reflections the shining crystal holds so deep are part of the dream become visible. You may or you may not love the Houses of Parliament, and you may think that the crack in a bell harshens Big Ben's music; but you can't say that the great grey pile there, with its towers, doesn't make as beautiful and exciting

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a dream as any river ever dreamed through the ages!

That's only a thought, by the way. We'll let the Wish Wagon wait (nobody'll see it: it will interfere with no one) while we wander through the Temple.

Though we've "parked" the Wish Wagon, its magic is on us still, and we are able to summon (as Aladdin summoned the Genie of the Lamp) any Glorious Personage we need to talk and walk with us. In the cool courts and green gardens of the Temple we may summon many Personages; not counting the ancient Knights Templar who came, and attracted the first generation of doves, in 1184. We must have Will Shakespeare, of course. No grey ghost of Bacon, who is welcome to haunt his own Gray's Inn, but glorious Will himself who illumined "this realm, this England" for as long as sun and moon may shine. Did you know that here in Middle Temple Hall he and his company of players presented "Twelfth Night" for Queen Bess, and the hall itself is one of the finest bits of her characteristic architecture in London-town? She was present at the play, of course, with her red hair and her white ruff high, her Maids of Honour smiling and flirting, and her Favourite of the Moment pretending to be interested in nobody save his Queen. You may resurrect her, the "Fairy Queen," seated at that great table carved of wood from a wrecked ship of the Armada.

But away with Queen Elizabeth! We'll meet her again, if not in the Temple. That abode of silence in the midst of enormous noise belongs really to less strident folk. Let's go into the Temple Church, the loveliest small church in England—perhaps in all the world. It was modelled after the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, and might be a chapel in the Palace of the Sleeping Beauty, so lost, so still, so dream-dim it is, with its dark marble knights who have lain slumbering for eight centuries or more. Even when the quaint lawyers of old sat round the walls of the flint church (each on his own bench with his own clients) those knights were already asleep in their dark marble. And they did not stir when, through a high-up, slit-like window, a writhing prisoner in a coffin of a cell had the grace now and then of hearing Mass.



Christopher Wren's noble gateway to the Temple.

Photo. Sport & General.

I wish we hadn't thought of that prisoner, especially as there were many of him. But never mind. He was abolished long ago. And it is sweet rather than sad to brood in the churchyard over the slab beneath which is said to lie the body of Oliver Goldsmith. Whyshould it be sad, since his soul talks with ours? Charles Lamb hovers near, too, for he loved the Temple Church and may have sprinkled flowers on that slab in the churchyard. As for Dickens—but, we'd best go out into the Fountain Court to find him. Do you remember Tom Pinch, John Westlock, and Ruth there? I'm sure the doves remember. They remember a great deal their ancestors have told them, and retell it in cooing, as poets tell stories in verse. Not everyone can understand. But we can. And the doves follow us to the Temple Gardens, whose

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One of the architectural glories of London—Middle Temple Hall—where Shakespeare and his company played "Twelfth Night" before Queen Elizabeth, and where still stands the table on which she used to sign State papers.

Photo. Campbell.

green peacefulness is so unsuspected from the world outside. There we can repeat in a whisper—oh, not louder!—the words that made those Gardens for ever famous: Shakespeare's words describing the origin of the Wars of the Roses:—

SUFFOLK: *Within the Temple Hall we were too loud:*
The garden here is more convenient.

PLANTAGENET: *Let him that is a true-born gentleman,*
And stands upon the honour of his birth.
If he suppose that I have pleaded truth,
From off this brier pluck a white rose with me.

SOMERSET: *Let him that is no coward, nor no flatterer,*
. . . . . .
Pluck a red rose from off this thorn with me.

One is never hungry when travelling in the Wish Wagon. One eats wishes, which are restoring, and supposed to resemble manna. But all the same, it would be a pity to miss those quaint restaurants in the City! We're quite near. So after a look through Guildhall, we lunch at the Guildhall restaurant. You'd never have known it existed if you hadn't been told. But you won't forget it! And now, it's really time for St. Paul's Cathedral.

Ought I to confess that the idea of St. Paul's and what it stands for are more to me than the reality—the stone body of it? Yes, despite the jewelled look of the windows, set in white walls and blue shadows that rise from the slabbed floor like a tidal river; despite some beautiful frescoes; despite



the Whispering Gallery, and the strange sound that murmurs for ever through the whole vast building, a subdued roar as if from distant seas, it is only the soul I love: the soul that once animated sacred dust down in the crypt: the soul that carried high those proud if faded banners which mean England through the Ages. You see, St. Paul's—splendid as it is in form and history—doesn't appeal to the heart as Westminster Abbey does. And we're going to Westminster Abbey presently—after we've curdled our blood in the Tower. Now, isn't it wonderful what you can do in a short time, without haste, when you're in a Wish Wagon?

We get a glimpse of London Bridge (no historian, not the oldest, knows of a time when there wasn't a bridge there), an eyeful

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of Billingsgate Wharf, oldest of all wharves and smelliest, because in Billingsgate Market every kind of fish is sold (in these days there's no slang there: Billingsgaters pride themselves on the elegance of their language!); we pass Love Lane and Harp Lane, and other old streets whose names are music





Fountain Court, in the Temple, at once brings to mind Tom Pinch, John Westlock, and Ruth.

Photo, Sport & General.

mixed with history; then there's Tower Bridge, like a huge toy built for a Titan's child; there's All Hallows, Barking, a church where wise ones go to "rub" old brasses; then the green oasis of Trinity Square, a "garden of memories which no one remembers." But—well, perhaps it's pleasanter to forget the public execution ground where many great nobles, including the Protector Somerset and the great Earl of Strafford, lost their heads, or the places within the Tower walls where queens and noble knights bowed their heads of old; and where in our war days—oh, we needn't bring up that!

I suppose one could write volumes (probably people have) about the prisoners and the executions in the Tower of London and on Tower Hill. The three English queens should head the list (if you count poor Jane Grey, who was called queen for the wonder of nine days), and surely the fairest flower ever broken there was of these three: Anne Boleyn. As for Katherine Howard, she may not be so popular, but her ghost is more persistent. She still haunts the Tower (as well as Hampton Court) crying out to King Henry to hear her. On the death anniversary her cries sound through the moan of the wind over the Thames and the lap, lap of the dark tide. For a moment a white figure trembles on the execution ground; and if the moon shines, there is seen the shadow of an axe that falls—rises, and is gone. Anne Boleyn's ghost scorns the Tower! She hated it to the point of disgust from the day she came from Greenwich by water to the day she died, but loved Hampton Court and the Garden there Henry made for her, so it is to Hampton Court she chooses to return.

Katherine Howard's ghost is not the only noble one, however, that visits the Tower of London, that ancient British, Roman, and Saxon fortress; Norman monument of conquering William; palace of Plantagenet and Tudor kings, and grim State-prison to this day. The little princes weep there; Cranmer prays; Sir Walter Raleigh walks; Protector Somerset passes on his way to die; Essex is seen, handsome as in life; Guy

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The Tower of London—and Traitors' Gate—haunted by the ghosts of many famous figures.

Photos. Sport & General and Campbell.

Fawkes shrieks in the torture of the rack; Judge Jeffreys howls in the delirium tremens which (it's difficult not to be glad!) killed him. But then, what can you expect of such a place? Think of the names—enough to lure back all the ghosts that ever anguished in those dark dungeons! The Outer Bail: the Traitor's Gate: the Bloody Tower.

Oh, come, let's hurry and forget a few things, in looking at the Crown Jewels.

Not that the Wakefield Tower itself is cheerful. It must harbour droves of ghosts, from the time of William Rufus to 1745 and the Jacobite Rebellion. Still, the regalia *does* brighten it a bit, and has done that bit since 1856, when it occurred to Queen Victoria —or someone—to keep the "Royal Head Lights" there. "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown," indeed! Look at this one, the Imperial State Crown with four arches, made for Queen Victoria's coronation and altered for King Edward's! But that isn't all. There's King George's with eight arches; and so many other crowns and coronets that presently you feel as if you had stared too long at the sun, and were seeing baby suns. Too bad that the Koh-i-Noor is represented merely by a model; but there's the Black Prince's ruby, which is so much older and more thrilling. No wonder it attracted Colonel Blood!

After the Tower of London, with its horrors and its glories, everything else would be an anti-climax, except—Westminster Abbey. We'll go there, and give our souls a bath, instead of lingering over the sights in between as ordinary folk would have us do.

But we must arrive by one route or other. Shall it be by way of Trafalgar Square? We don't need to stop at the National Gallery, for our Wish Wagon can take us there at any time, even through locked doors at midnight when the pictures come out of their frames and walk. All we want, on our way to the Abbey, is to draw in another deep breath of England's past and present —an out-of-doors breath and to be cheered by the bronze lions. Lazy lions they seem, crouched under the soaring Nelson column; lazy lions, never regarding the small boys who play by the sparkling water and may be among England's sailors some day.

Westminster Abbey! Sweet chimes welcome us. Under the blue sky the old, old stones show the soft grey of a dove's breast, ruffled with carvings instead of plumes. As

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CHAUCER.

you and I stand, gazing up at the noble North transept with its pinnacled buttresses and the glory of its immense Rose window, for an instant we seem to see—as in a mirage—the "Island of Thorns" looming out of mist-veiled marshes, where the skill and above all the faith of England's earliest architects dared to found England's greatest religious monument. How wonderful even those beginnings of this finished splendour must have seemed, rising firm as God's promises on that one piece of solid ground among quicksands!

There! If the marshes weren't "quicksands," please don't correct me. I don't wish to know it. What I should like to know about the making of the Abbey is, whether the monk-architects had sense of humour enough to smile when they swept away a temple of Apollo, just using such bits of it as came in handy, to build their tribute to the Christians' God?

Probably they had a sense of humour, because a sense of beauty often goes with it, the humour giving mental balance and preventing grotesque mistakes in life. Anyhow, monkish figures are said to haunt the oldest parts of this oldest Abbey, and I hope they are *those* monks who had the first inspiration. I should like them to know some of the wonderful things that have helped to make the music of the great poem in stone which they began; how, within those walls every king of England since Harold (one can't count Edward V., who never reigned) has been crowned; how even the Parliaments of early days met in this Chapter House; how no ceremonial that concerns Britain can be worthily celebrated save in the Abbey—*their* Abbey; and how among the tombs of kings and queens are those of men royal of mind, heart, or soul who have served England, made her proud or glad.

Oh, the beauty of those ancient tombs to the left of the mosaic-paved Sanctuary, where Sovereigns are crowned! That one of Aveline, Countess of Lancaster, and the little statue at the head of Aymer de Valence! But it is the Poets' Corner which calls us away from the beauty of sculptured knights and ladies, and even angels.

Going in by the small entrance in the South transept, which seems almost secret, as if you alone had discovered it, you are close to Poets' Corner. Only two poets were laid there at first, Chaucer and Spenser, for whose sake the name "Poets' Corner" was given. But the welcome spread and spread, and other great ones were made neighbours of the poets when they left this earth to live among the stars. I hear myself repeating in the shadows there (it is brighter as I look up!), "Life would not be worth living for any of us if the



Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey, in which Chaucer and Spenser were the first two poets to be buried.

Photo. H. N. King.



SPENSER.

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dead really died. It is the glory of the deathless dead that lights our way."

At first glance the beauty of King Henry VII.'s chapel stops our breath. The jewel of England! There are things that try to be like it in other places, but nothing *is* like it.

Compared to the chapel of Edward the Confessor, Henry VII.'s tribute to his religion is new—begun only in 1509, worked out in Tudor-Gothic, or by magic. But it is so beautiful, it makes you feel that the world could never have lived content before its birth. The stone of the niched and statued walls and the wonderful fan-tracery vaulting is not mere stone. It is Thought. The ethereal effect is unbelievable till you've seen it. The light is mysteriously beautiful, like the light between moonset and dawn. Then comes a shaft of sunshine, and the columns with their fluted fans suddenly are turned to sheaves of sacred lilies. You feel that you can bear no more beauty. But some musician is practising on the great organ. It is the last touch. The music lends perfume to the lilies and a sweet, sad fragrance to the old Tudor roses.



The effigy of Charles II.—one of the Westminster Waxworks. The figure of Nelson is visible on the right and that of the Duke of Buckingham on the left.

Photo. David Weller

Yes, we were right to go to Westminster Abbey precisely when we did. Its beauty and hopefulness took the tragedies of the Tower out of our minds and put us in tune with the day again. Now just a rush—but not an ordinary tourist rush!—up the little winding stairs to the Abbot Islip's Chapel, to see the Westminster Waxworks. They are famous, yet hardly anyone seems ever to know about them. Funeral effigies they were, perfect copies of the dead. There is Queen Elizabeth, rather ghastly and fantastic: hair, costume, and all, intact since the day when her prayer for "one moment of time" was prayed in vain. King Charles the Second, so pathetic—with his large, wistful dark glass eyes—that you could cry over him; Nelson (though his wax-work should be at St. Paul's, where his body lies); and others. But those three are the best, worth walking miles to see.

We, luckily, needn't walk. When we leave the Abbey, the Wish Wagon takes us to Whitehall — the Museum, I mean. And "if ye have tears, prepare to shed them now!" You may admire Cromwell as a strong and just man (*I* do!) and you may admit that King Charles the Martyr was, to say the least, trying, and extremely *Stuart*-like. But you can't, calmly, see the long window through which he walked out on to the scaffold for all the world to see. And the Nelson relics—to step a long way on in history—make you "bite your heart." Little intimate things, almost part of his so utterly human self. His small-looking clothes. His purse, in which there was never too much money. His last, loving letter to Emma Hamilton: a bit of the Union Jack that covered him on the *Victory* when he lay dead, his sailors sobbing. You could sob, too. So, to cheer yourself up, do for goodness' sake hurry and look at that fascinating model of the Battle of Waterloo.

Now there's Buckingham Palace, and St. James's Square, and Pall Mall to glance at, before you go on to old "Pickadil," which was the first name of stately Piccadilly.

Of course, we ought to have seen queer old Cheapside, and Holborn and Staple Inn, that perfect row of Tudor houses in the midst of comparative modernity. We should have visited the other "Inns," too: Gray's

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and Lincoln's. But in a Wish Wagon you mustn't be a slave to routine. Just a glimpse of Pall Mall, very dignified nowadays, though it was named after a game of skill, and forgetful of Nell Gwynne, who used to talk to King Charles from her garden on a terrace, he standing on a green beneath. Perhaps the dignity began when Gainsborough lived and painted in Pall Mall, for rank and fashion flocked to drink his tea and see his pictures.

"Pickadil" comes next. Yes, that was the name, early in the seventeenth century, of the "busiest rich man's street in Europe"—that runs from the top of the Haymarket to Hyde Park Corner. Once upon a time there was a famous old "ordinary" which called itself "Pickadil," because it was on the hem or outskirts of London, "Pickadil" in ancient dictionaries meaning "the round hem set about the skirt of a garment."

Even though it's the fashion to sneer at the Royal Academy, and say that each year's pictures are duller than the last, nevertheless Burlington House is the Royal Crown of Piccadilly, even as when Lord Burlington was the host of Handel, and so many other starlike geniuses that his mansion was known as "Galaxy House."

Now shall we go out of Piccadilly by way of narrow, brilliant Bond Street, the Rue de la Paix of London? Yes, but we mustn't miss Regent Street, with its fine shops and gracious, crescent curve. If we did, poor Nash, who built it as a speculation, would not forgive us.

And now, for the first time in our wonderful day, we'll hurry a little, because I have a special plan for sunset. Chelsea is a long way, but we must be there with the twilight; you'll see why. And between now and then you must wander a little in Mayfair, the Mayfair not of fashionable to-day, but Mayfair of the past. That is why I waited till this hour. Already there's a dimness, a dreaminess in the air. It is like a curtain which hides tired slaves of society, tearing about to each other's houses, but shows us people of long ago: Shelley walking home to Half Moon Street, his head high, a poem in the making behind his eyes; Emma Hamilton in great beauty, alighting before her door in Clarges Street. In Curzon Street we're sure to meet Lord Beaconsfield; and Horace Walpole will be strolling through Berkeley Square. There he goes, past the most famous haunted house in London! You remember, Bulwer wrote of it.



The historic building in Whitehall—now the United Service Museum—from which Charles I. walked on to the scaffold.

Photo, Campbell.



At last, Chelsea, and sunset! Carlyle's house, Rossetti's house, the Royal Hospital, the Chelsea pensioners, pathetic and beautiful old soldiermen. Then, the tree-shaded Chelsea Embankment and the glass-smooth Thames, as the sky grows red. It is the red of a strange, burning rose; a dusky red; and in the river reflected lights go down like illuminated roots of magic plants. A young crescent moon shines through the pink haze, curved and white as a baby's arm. Night falls. Wish Wagons do not travel in the dark. We must go home. Our signal has come. But we have seen a few things; just a few that London has to show!

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COMRADE BINGO

BY

P.G.WODEHOUSE

ILLUSTRATED BY A.WALLIS MILLS

THE thing really started in the Park—at the Marble Arch end, where blighters of every description collect on Sunday afternoons and stand on soap-boxes and make speeches. It isn't often you'll find me there, but it so happened that on this particular Sabbath, having a call to pay in Manchester Square, I had taken a short cut through and found myself right in the middle of it. On the prompt side a gang of top-hatted birds were starting an open-air missionary service; on the O.P. side an atheist was hauling up his slacks with a good deal of vim, though handicapped a bit by having no roof to his mouth; a chappie who wanted a hundred million quid to finance him in a scheme for solving the problem of perpetual motion was playing to a thin house up left centre; while in front of me there stood a little group of serious thinkers with a banner labelled "Heralds Of The Red Dawn"; and as I came up one of the Heralds, a bearded egg in a slouch hat and a tweed suit, was slipping it into the Idle Rich with such breadth and vigour that I paused for a moment to get an earful. While I was standing there somebody spoke to me.

"Mr. Wooster, surely?"

Stout chappie. Couldn't place him for a second. Then I got him. Bingo Little's uncle, the one I had lunch with at the time when young Bingo was in love with that waitress at the Piccadilly bun-shop. No wonder I hadn't recognized him at first. When I had seen him last he had been a rather sloppy old gentleman—coming down to lunch, I remember, in carpet slippers and a velvet smoking-jacket; whereas now dapper simply wasn't the word. He absolutely gleamed in the sunlight in a silk hat, morning coat, lavender spats, and sponge-bag trousers, as now worn. Dressy to a degree.

"Oh, hallo!" I said. "Going strong?"

"I am in excellent health, I thank you. And you?"

"In the pink. Just been over in France for a change of air. Got back the day before yesterday. Seen anything of Bingo lately?"

"Bingo?"

"Your nephew."

"Oh, Richard? No, not very recently. Since my marriage a little coolness seems to have sprung up."

"Sorry to hear that. So you've married since I saw you, what? Mrs. Little all right?"

"My wife is happily robust. But—er—*not* Mrs. Little. Since we last met a gracious Sovereign has been pleased to bestow on me a signal mark of his favour in the shape of—ah—a peerage. On the publication of the last Honours List I became Lord Bittlesham."

"By Jove! Really? I say, heartiest congratulations. That's the stuff to give the troops, what? Lord Bittlesham?" I said. "Why, you're the owner of Ocean Breeze."

"Yes. Marriage has enlarged my horizon in many directions. My wife is interested in horse-racing, and I now maintain a small stable. I understand that Ocean Breeze is fancied, as I am told the expression is, for a race which will take place at the end of the month at Goodwood, the Duke of Richmond's seat in Sussex."

"The Goodwood Cup. Rather! I've got my chemise on it for one."

"Indeed? Well, I trust the animal will justify your confidence. I know little of these matters myself, but my wife tells me that it is regarded in knowledgeable circles as what I believe is termed a snip."

At this moment I suddenly noticed that

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the audience was gazing in our direction with a good deal of interest, and I saw that the bearded chappie was pointing at us.

"Yes, look at them! Drink them in!" he was yelling, his voice rising above the perpetual-motion fellow's and beating the missionary service all to nothing. "There you see two typical members of the class which has down-trodden the poor for centuries. Idlers! Non-producers! Look at the tall, thin one with the face like a motor-mascot. Has he ever done an honest day's work in his life? No! A prowler, a trifler, and a blood-sucker! And I bet he still owes his tailor for those trousers!"

He seemed to me to be verging on the personal, and I didn't think a lot of it. Old Bittlesham, on the other hand, was pleased and amused.

"A great gift of expression these fellows have," he chuckled. "Very trenchant."

"And the fat one!" proceeded the chappie. "Don't miss him. Do you know who that is? That's Lord Bittlesham! One of the worst. What has he ever done except eat four square meals a day? His god is his belly, and he sacrifices burnt-offerings to it till his eyes bubble. If you opened that man now you would find enough lunch to support ten working-class families for a week."

"You know, that's rather well put," I said, but the old boy didn't seem to see it. He had turned a brightish magenta and was bubbling like a kettle on the boil.

"Come away, Mr. Wooster," he said. "I am the last man to oppose the right of free speech, but I refuse to listen to this vulgar abuse any longer."

We legged it with quiet dignity, the chappie pursuing us with his foul innuendoes to the last. Dashed embarrassing.

NEXT day I looked in at the club, and found young Bingo in the smoking-room.

"Hallo, Bingo," I said, toddling over to his corner full of bonhomie, for I was glad to see the chump. "How's the boy?"

"Jogging along."

"I saw your uncle yesterday."

Young Bingo unleashed a grin that split his face in half.

"I know you did, you trifler. Well, sit down, old thing, and suck a bit of blood. How's the prowling these days?"

"Good Lord! You weren't there!"

"Yes, I was."

"I didn't see you."

"Yes, you did. But perhaps you didn't recognize me in the shrubbery."

"The shrubbery?"

"The beard, my boy. Worth every penny I paid for it. Defies detection."

I goggled at him.

"I don't understand."

"It's a long story. Have a martini or a small gore-and-soda, and I'll tell you all about it. Before we start, give me your honest opinion. Isn't she the most wonderful girl you ever saw in your puff?"

He had produced a photograph from somewhere, like a conjurer taking a rabbit out of a hat, and was waving it in front of me. It appeared to be a female of sorts, all eyes and teeth.

"Oh, great Scott!" I said. "Don't tell me you're in love again."

He seemed aggrieved.

"What do you mean—again?"

"Well, to my certain knowledge you've been in love with at least half-a-dozen girls since the spring, and it's only July now. There was that waitress and Honoria Glossop and——"

"Oh, tush! Not to say pish! Those girls? Mere passing fancies. This is the real thing."

"Where did you meet her?"

"On top of a bus. Her name is Charlotte Corday Rowbotham."

"My God!"

"It's not her fault, poor child. Her father had her christened that because he's all for the Revolution, and it seems that the original Charlotte Corday used to go about stabbing oppressors in their baths, which entitles her to consideration and respect. You must meet old Rowbotham, Bertie. A delightful chap. Wants to massacre the bourgeoisie, sack Park Lane, and disembowel the hereditary aristocracy. Well, nothing could be fairer than that, what? But about Charlotte. We were on top of the bus, and it started to rain. I offered her my umbrella, and we chatted of this and that. I fell in love and got her address, and a couple of days later I bought the beard and toddled round and met the family."

"But why the beard?"

"Well, she had told me all about her father on the bus, and I saw that to get any footing at all in the home I should have to join these Red Dawn blighters; and naturally, if I was to make speeches in the Park, where at any moment I might run into a dozen people I knew, something in the nature of a disguise was indicated. So I bought the beard, and, by Jove, old boy, I've become dashed attached to the thing. When I take it off to come in here, for instance, I feel absolutely nude. It's done me a lot of good with old Rowbotham. He thinks I'm a Bolshevist of sorts who has to go about disguised because of the police. You really must meet old Rowbotham, Bertie. I tell you what, are you doing anything to-morrow afternoon?"

"Nothing special. Why?"

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"Good! Then you can have us all to tea at your flat. I had promised to take the crowd to Lyons' Popular Café after a meeting we're holding down in Lambeth, but I can save money this way; and, believe me, laddie, nowadays, as far as I'm concerned, a penny saved is a penny earned. My uncle told you he'd got married?"

"Yes. And he said there was a coolness between you."

"Coolness? I'm down to zero. Ever since he married he's been launching out in every direction and economizing on *me*. I suppose that peerage cost the old devil the deuce of a sum. Even baronetcies have gone up frightfully nowadays, I'm told. And he's started a racing-stable. By the way, put your last collar-stud on Ocean Breeze for the Goodwood Cup. It's a cert."

"I'm going to."

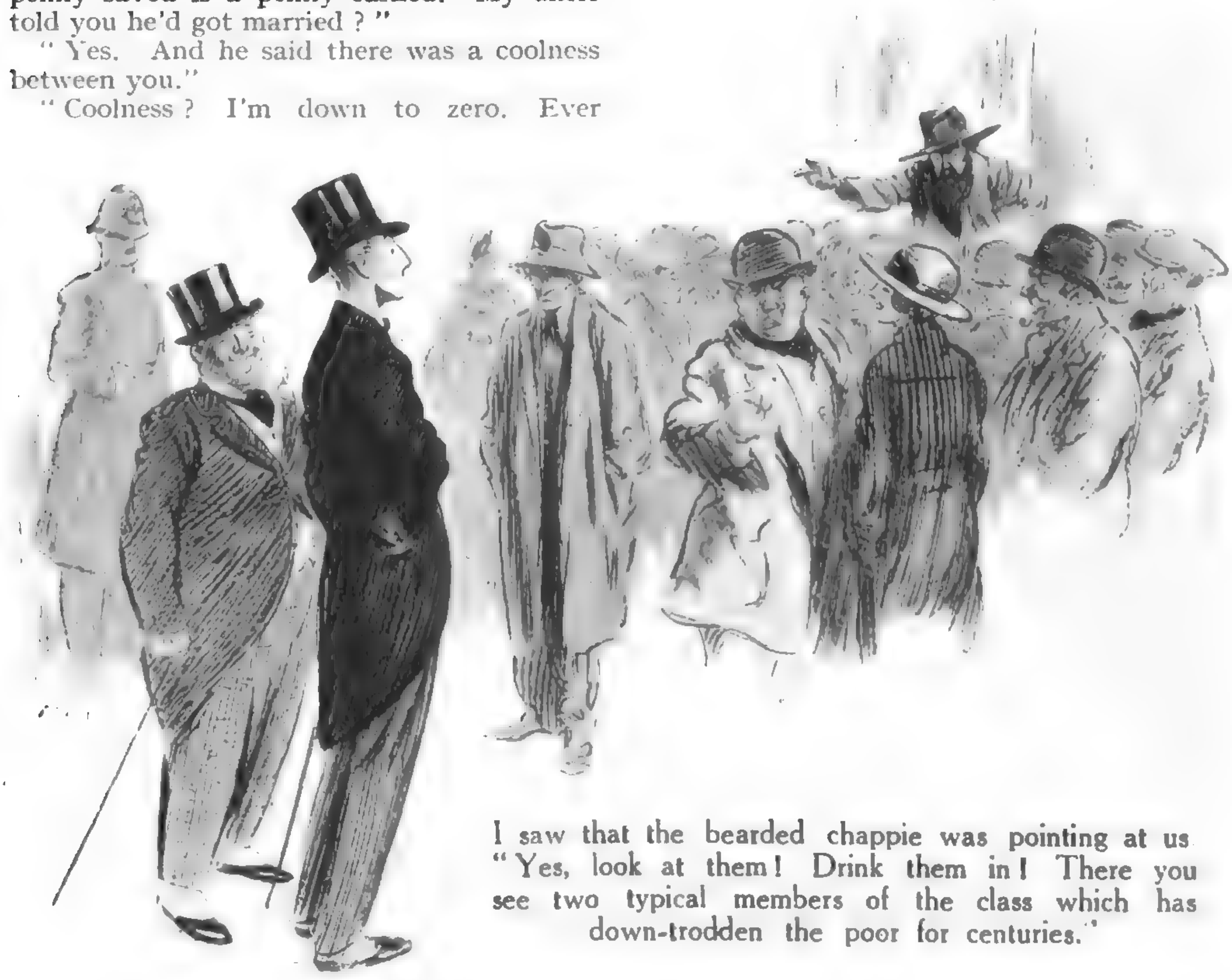
"It can't lose. I mean to win enough on it to marry Charlotte with. You're going to Goodwood, of course?"

"Rather!"

"So are we. We're holding a meeting on Cup day just outside the paddock."

"But, I say, aren't you taking frightful risks? Your uncle's sure to be at Goodwood. Suppose he spots you? He'll be fed to the gills if he finds out that you're the fellow who ragged him in the Park."

"How the deuce is he to find out? Use your intelligence, you prowling inhaler of red corpuscles. If he didn't spot me yesterday, why should he spot me at Goodwood? Well, 'thanks for your cordial invitation for to-morrow, old thing. We shall be delighted to accept. Do us well, laddie, and blessings shall reward you. By the way, I may have misled you by using the word 'tea.' None of your wafer slices of bread-and-butter. We're good trenchermen, we of the Revolution. What we shall require will be something on the order of scrambled eggs, muffins, jam, ham, cake, and sardines. Expect us at five sharp."



I saw that the bearded chappie was pointing at us

"Yes, look at them! Drink them in! There you see two typical members of the class which has down-trodden the poor for centuries."

"But, I say, I'm not quite sure——"

"Yes, you are. Silly ass, don't you see that this is going to do you a bit of good when the Revolution breaks loose? When you see old Rowbotham sprinting up Piccadilly with a dripping knife in each hand, you'll be jolly thankful to be able to remind him that he once ate your tea and shrimps. There will be four of us—Charlotte, self, the old man, and Comrade Butt. I suppose he will insist on coming along."

"Who the devil's Comrade Butt?"

"Did you notice a fellow standing on my left in our little troupe yesterday? Small, shrivelled chap. Looks like a haddock with

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lung-trouble. That's Butt. My rival, dash him. He's sort of semi-engaged to Charlotte at the moment. Till I came along he was the blue-eyed boy. He's got a voice like a fog-horn, and old Rowbotham thinks a lot of him. But, hang it, if I can't thoroughly encompass this Butt and cut him out and put him where he belongs among the discards —well, I'm not the man I was, that's all. He may have a big voice, but he hasn't my gift of expression. Thank heaven I was once cox of my college boat. Well, I must be pushing now. I say, you don't know how I could raise fifty quid somehow, do you ?"

"Why don't you work ?"

"Work ?" said young Bingo, surprised. "What, me ? No, I shall have to think of some way. I must put at least fifty on Ocean Breeze. Well, see you to-morrow. God bless you, old sort, and don't forget the muffins."

I DON'T know why, ever since I first knew him at school, I should have felt a rummy feeling of responsibility for young Bingo. I mean to say, he's not my son (thank goodness) or my brother or anything like that. He's got absolutely no claim on me at all, and yet a large-sized chunk of my existence seems to be spent in fussing over him like a bally old hen and hauling him out of the soup. I suppose it must be some rare beauty in my nature or something. At any rate, this latest affair of his worried me. He seemed to be doing his best to marry into a family of pronounced loonies, and how the deuce he thought he was going to support even a mentally afflicted wife on nothing a year beat me. Old Bittlesham was bound to knock off his allowance if he did anything of the sort ; and, with a fellow like young Bingo, if you knocked off his allowance, you might just as well hit him on the head with an axe and make a clean job of it.

"Jeeves," I said, when I got home, "I'm worried."

"Sir ?"

"About Mr. Little. I won't tell you about it now, because he's bringing some friends of his to tea to-morrow, and then you will be able to judge for yourself. I want you to observe closely, Jeeves, and form your decision."

"Very good, sir."

"And about the tea. Get in some muffins."

"Yes, sir."

"And some jam, ham, cake, scrambled eggs, and five or six wagonloads of sardines."

"Sardines, sir ?" said Jeeves, with a shudder.

"Sardines."

There was an awkward pause.

"Don't blame me, Jeeves," I said. "It isn't my fault."

"No, sir."

"Well, that's that."

"Yes, sir."

I could see the man was brooding tensely.

I'VE found, as a general rule in life, that the things you think are going to be the scaliest nearly always turn out not so bad after all ; but it wasn't that way with Bingo's tea-party. From the moment he invited himself I felt that the thing was going to be blue round the edges, and it was. And I think the most gruesome part of the whole affair was the fact that, for the first time since I'd known him, I saw Jeeves come very near to being rattled. I suppose there's a chink in everyone's armour, and young Bingo found Jeeves's right at the drop of the flag when he breezed in with six inches or so of brown beard hanging on to his chin. I had forgotten to warn Jeeves about the beard, and it came on him absolutely out of a blue sky. I saw the man's jaw drop, and he clutched at the table for support. I don't blame him, mind you. Few people have ever looked fouler than young Bingo in the fungus. Jeeves paled a little ; then the weakness passed and he was himself again. But I could see that he had been shaken.

Young Bingo was too busy introducing the mob to take much notice. They were a very C3 collection. Comrade Butt looked like one of the things that come out of dead trees after the rain ; moth-eaten was the word I should have used to describe old Rowbotham ; and as for Charlotte, she seemed to take me straight into another and a dreadful world. It wasn't that she was exactly bad-looking. In fact, if she had knocked off starchy foods and done Swedish exercises for a bit, she might have been quite tolerable. But there was too much of her. Billowy curves. Well-nourished perhaps expresses it best. And, while she may have had a heart of gold, the thing you noticed about her first was that she had a tooth of gold. I knew that young Bingo, when in form, could fall in love with practically anything of the other sex ; but this time I couldn't see any excuse for him at all.

"My friend Mr. Wooster," said Bingo, completing the ceremonial.

Old Rowbotham looked at me and then he looked round the room, and I could see he wasn't particularly braced. There's nothing of absolutely Oriental luxury about the old flat, but I have managed to make myself fairly comfortable, and I suppose the surroundings jarred him a bit.

"Mr. Wooster ?" said old Rowbotham. "May I say Comrade Wooster ?"

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I had forgotten to warn Jeeves about the beard, and it came on him absolutely out of a blue sky.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Are you of the movement?"

"Well—er——"

"Do you yearn for the Revolution?"

"Well, I don't know that I exactly yearn. I mean to say, as far as I can make out, the whole nub of the scheme seems to be to massacre coves like me; and I don't mind owning I'm not frightfully keen on the idea."

"But I'm talking him round," said Bingo. "I'm wrestling with him. A few more treatments ought to do the trick."

Old Rowbotham looked at me a bit doubtfully.

"Comrade Little has great eloquence," he admitted.

"I think he talks something wonderful," said the girl, and young Bingo shot a glance of such succulent devotion at her that I reeled in my tracks. It seemed to depress Comrade Butt a good deal too. He scowled at the carpet and said something about dancing on volcanoes.

"Tea is served, sir," said Jeeves.

"Tea, pa!" said Charlotte, starting at the word like the old war-horse who hears the bugle; and we got down to it.

Funny how one changes as the years roll on. At school, I remember, I would cheerfully have sold my soul for scrambled eggs and sardines at five in the afternoon; but somehow, since reaching man's estate, I had rather dropped out of the habit; and I'm bound to admit I was appalled to a goodish extent at the way the sons and daughter of the Revolution shoved their heads down and went for the foodstuffs. Even Comrade Butt cast off his gloom for a space and immersed his whole being in scrambled eggs, only coming to the surface at intervals to grab another cup of tea. Presently the hot water gave out, and I turned to Jeeves.

"More hot water."

"Very good, sir."

"Hey! what's this? What's this?" Old Rowbotham had lowered his cup and was eyeing us sternly. He tapped Jeeves on the shoulder. "No servility, my lad; no servility!"

"I beg your pardon, sir?"

'Don't call me 'sir.' Call me Comrade. Do you know what you are, my lad? You're an obsolete relic of an exploded feudal system."

"Very good, sir."

"If there's one thing that makes the blood boil in my veins——"

"Have another sardine," chipped in young

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Bingo—the first sensible thing he'd done since I had known him. Old Rowbotham took three and dropped the subject, and Jeeves drifted away. I could see by the look of his back what he felt.

At last, just as I was beginning to feel that it was going on for ever, the thing finished. I woke up to find the party getting ready to leave.

Sardines and about three quarts of tea had mellowed old Rowbotham. There was quite a genial look in his eye as he shook my hand.

"I must thank you for your hospitality, Comrade Wooster," he said.

"Oh, not at all! Only too glad——"

"Hospitality!" snorted the man Butt, going off in my ear like a depth-charge. He was scowling in a morose sort of manner at young Bingo and the girl, who were giggling together by the window. "I wonder the food didn't turn to ashes in our mouths! Eggs! Muffins! Sardines! All wrung from the bleeding lips of the starving poor!"

"Oh, I say! What a beastly idea!"

"I will send you some literature on the subject of the Cause," said old Rowbotham. "And soon, I hope, we shall see you at one of our little meetings."

Jeeves came in to clear away, and found me sitting among the ruins. It was all very well for Comrade Butt to knock the food, but he had pretty well finished the ham; and if you had shoved the remainder of the jam into the bleeding lips of the starving poor it would hardly have made them sticky.

"Well, Jeeves," I said, "how about it?"

"I would prefer to express no opinion, sir."

"Jeeves, Mr. Little is in love with that female."

"So I gathered, sir. She was slapping him in the passage."

I clutched my brow.

"Slapping him?"

"Yes, sir. Roguishly."

"Great Scott! I didn't know it had got as far as that. How did Comrade Butt seem to be taking it? Or perhaps he didn't see?"

"Yes, sir, he observed the entire proceedings. He struck me as extremely jealous."

"I don't blame him. Jeeves, what are we to do?"

"I could not say, sir."

"It's a bit thick."

"Very much so, sir."

And that was all the consolation I got from Jeeves.

I HAD promised to meet young Bingo next day, to tell him what I thought of his infernal Charlotte, and I was mooching slowly up St. James's Street, trying to think how the dickens I could explain to him, without hurting his feelings, that I considered her one of the world's foulest, when who should come toddling out of the Devonshire Club but old Bittlesham and Bingo himself. I hurried on and overtook them.

"What-ho!" I said.

The result of this simple greeting was a bit of a shock. Old Bittlesham quivered from head to foot like a poleaxed blancmange. His eyes were popping and his face had gone sort of greenish.

"Mr. Wooster!" He seemed to recover somewhat, as if I wasn't the worst thing that could have happened to him. "You gave me a severe start."

"Oh, sorry!"

'My uncle," said young Bingo in a hushed, bedside sort of voice, "isn't feeling quite himself this morning. He's had a threatening letter."

"I go in fear of my life," said old Bittlesham.

"Threatening letter?"

"Written," said old Bittlesham, "in an uneducated hand and couched in terms of uncompromising menace. Mr. Wooster, do you recall a sinister, bearded man who assailed me in no measured terms in Hyde Park last Sunday?"

I jumped, and shot a look at young Bingo. The only expression on his face was one of grave, kindly concern.

"Why—ah—yes," I said. "Bearded man. Chap with a beard."

"Could you identify him, if necessary?"

"Well, I—er—how do you mean?"

"The fact is, Bertie," said Bingo, "we think this man with the beard is at the bottom of all this business. I happened to be walking late last night through Pounceby Gardens, where Uncle Mortimer lives, and as I was passing the house a fellow came hurrying down the steps in a furtive sort of way. Probably he had just been shoving the letter in at the front door. I noticed that he had a beard. I didn't think any more of it, however, until this morning, when Uncle Mortimer showed me the letter he had received and told me about the chap in the Park. I'm going to make inquiries."

"The police should be informed," said Lord Bittlesham.

"No," said young Bingo, firmly, "not at this stage of the proceedings. It would hamper me. Don't you worry, uncle; I think I can track this fellow down. You leave it all to me. I'll pop you into a taxi now, and go and talk it over with Bertie."

"You're a good boy, Richard," said old Bittlesham, and we put him in a passing cab and pushed off. I turned and looked young Bingo squarely in the eyeball.

"Did you send that letter?" I said.

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"Rather! You ought to have seen it, Bertie! One of the best gent's ordinary threatening letters I ever wrote."

"But where's the sense of it?"

"Bertie, my lad," said Bingo, taking me earnestly by the coat-sleeve, "I had an excellent reason. Posterity may say of me what it will, but one thing it can never say—that I have not a good solid business head. Look here!" He waved a bit of paper in front of my eyes.

"Great Scott!" It was a cheque—an absolute, dashed cheque for fifty of the best, signed Bittlesham and made out to the order of R. Little. "What's that for?"

"Expenses," said Bingo, pouching it. "You don't suppose an investigation like this can be carried on for nothing, do you? I now proceed to the bank and startle them into a fit with it. Later I edge round to my bookie and put the entire sum on Ocean Breeze. What you want in situations of this kind, Bertie, is tact. If I had gone to my uncle and asked him for fifty quid, would I have got it? No! But by exercising tact—— Oh! by the way, what do you think of Charlotte?"

"Well—er——"

Young Bingo massaged my sleeve affectionately.

"I know, old man, I know. Don't try to find words. She bowled you over, eh? Left you speechless, what? *I* know! That's the effect she has on everybody. Well, I leave you here, laddie. Oh, before we part—Butt! What of Butt? Nature's worst blunder, don't you think?"

"I must say I've seen cheerier souls."

"I think I've got him licked, Bertie. Charlotte is coming to the Zoo with me this afternoon. Alone. And later on to the pictures. That looks like the beginning of the end, what? Well, toodle-oo, friend of my youth. If you've nothing better to do this morning, you might take a stroll along Bond Street and be picking out a wedding present."



I was appalled at the way the sons and daughter of the Revolution shoved their heads down and went for the foodstuffs.

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I LOST sight of Bingo after that. I left messages a couple of times at the club, asking him to ring me up, but they didn't have any effect. I took it that he was too busy to respond. The Sons of the Red Dawn also passed out of my life, though Jeeves told me he had met Comrade Butt one evening and had a brief chat with him. He reported Butt as gloomier than ever. In the competition for the bulging Charlotte, Butt had apparently gone right back in the betting.

"Mr. Little would appear to have eclipsed him entirely, sir," said Jeeves.

"Bad news, Jeeves; bad news!"

"Yes, sir."

"I suppose what it amounts to, Jeeves, is that, when young Bingo really takes his coat off and starts in, there is no power of God or man that can prevent him making a chump of himself."

"It would seem so, sir," said Jeeves.

Then Goodwood came along, and I dug out the best suit and popped down.

I never know, when I'm telling a story, whether to cut the thing down to plain facts or whether to drool on and shove in a lot of atmosphere and all that. I mean, many a cove would no doubt edge into the final spasm of this narrative with a long description of Goodwood, featuring the blue sky, the rolling prospect, the joyous crowds of pickpockets, and the parties of the second part who were having their pockets picked, and—in a word, what not. But better give it a miss, I think. Even if I wanted to go into details about the bally meeting I don't think I'd have the heart to. The thing's too recent. The anguish hasn't had time to pass. You see, what happened was that Ocean Breeze (curse him!) finished absolutely nowhere for the Cup. Believe me, nowhere.

These are the times that try men's souls. It's never pleasant to be caught in the machinery when a favourite comes unstitched, and in the case of this particular dashed animal, one had come to look on the running of the race as a pure formality, a sort of quaint, old-world ceremony to be gone through before one sauntered up to the bookie and collected. I had wandered out of the paddock to try and forget, when I bumped into old Bittlesham: and he looked so rattled and purple, and his eyes were standing out of his head at such an angle, that I simply pushed my hand out and shook his in silence.

"Me, too," I said. "Me, too. How much did *you* drop?"

"Drop?"

"On Ocean Breeze."

"I did not bet on Ocean Breeze."

"What! You owned the favourite for the Cup, and didn't back it!"

"I never bet on horse-racing. It is against my principles. I am told that the animal failed to win the contest."

"Failed to win! Why, he was so far behind that he nearly came in first in the next race."

"Tut!" said old Bittlesham.

"Tut is right," I agreed. Then the rumminess of the thing struck me. 'But if you haven't dropped a parcel over the race," I said, "why are you looking so rattled?"

"That fellow is here!"

"What fellow?"

"That bearded man."

It will show you to what an extent the iron had entered into my soul when I say that this was the first time I had given a thought to young Bingo. I suddenly remembered now that he had told me he would be at Goodwood.

'He is making an inflammatory speech at this very moment, specifically directed at me. Come! Where that crowd is." He lugged me along and, by using his weight scientifically, got us into the front rank. "Look! Listen!"

YOUNG Bingo was certainly tearing off some ripe stuff. Inspired by the agony of having put his little all on a stumer that hadn't finished in the first six, he was fairly letting himself go on the subject of the blackness of the hearts of plutocratic owners who allowed a trusting public to imagine a horse was the real goods when it couldn't trot the length of its stable without getting its legs crossed and sitting down to rest. He then went on to draw what I'm bound to say was a most moving picture of the ruin of a working-man's home, due to this dishonesty. He showed us the working-man, all optimism and simple trust, believing every word he read in the papers about Ocean Breeze's form; depriving his wife and children of food in order to back the brute; going without beer so as to be able to cram an extra bob on; robbing the baby's money-box with a hatpin on the eve of the race; and finally getting let down with a thud. Dashed impressive it was. I could see old Rowbotham nodding his head gently, while poor old Butt glowered at the speaker with ill-concealed jealousy. The audience ate it.

"But what does Lord Bittlesham care," shouted Bingo, 'if the poor working-man loses his hard-earned savings? I tell you, friends and comrades, you may talk, and you may argue, and you may cheer, and you may pass resolutions, but what you need is Action! Action! The world won't be a fit place for honest men to live in till the blood of Lord Bittlesham and his kind

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The policeman was shoving his way back through the crowd, with Bingo in his right hand and Comrade Butt in his left.

flows in rivers down the gutters of Park Lane ! "

Roars of approval from the populace, most of whom, I suppose, had had their little bit on blighted Ocean Breeze, and were feeling it deeply. Old Bittlesham bounded over to a large, sad policeman who was watching the proceedings, and appeared to be urging him to rally round. The policeman pulled at his moustache, and smiled gently, but that was as far as he seemed inclined to go ; and old Bittlesham came back to me, puffing not a little.

" It's monstrous ! The man definitely threatens my personal safety, and that policeman declines to interfere. Said it was just talk. Talk ! It's monstrous ! "

" Absolutely," I said, but I can't say it seemed to cheer him up much.

Comrade Butt had taken the centre of the stage now. He had a voice like the Last Trump, and you could hear every word he said, but somehow he didn't seem to be clicking. I suppose the fact was he was too impersonal, if that's the word I want. After Bingo's speech the audience was in the mood for something a good deal snappier than just general remarks about the Cause. They had started to heckle the poor blighter pretty freely when he stopped in the middle of a sentence, and I saw that he was staring at old Bittlesham.

The crowd thought he had dried up.

" Suck a lozenge," shouted someone.

Comrade Butt pulled himself together with a jerk, and even from where I stood I could see the nasty gleam in his eye.

" Ah," he yelled, " you may mock, comrades ; you may jeer and sneer ; and you may scoff ; but let me tell you that the movement is spreading every day and every hour. Yes, even amongst the so-called upper classes it's spreading. Perhaps you'll believe me when I tell you that here to-day on this very spot we have in our little band one of our most earnest workers, the nephew of that very Lord Bittlesham whose name you were hooting but a moment ago."

And before poor old Bingo had a notion of what was up, he had reached out a hand and grabbed the beard. It came off all in one

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piece, and, well as Bingo's speech had gone, it was simply nothing compared with the hit made by this bit of business. I heard old Bittlesham give one short, sharp snort of amazement at my side, and then any remarks he may have made were drowned in thunders of applause.

I'm bound to say that in this crisis young Bingo acted with a good deal of decision and character. To grab Comrade Butt by the neck and try to twist his head off was with him the work of a moment. But before he could get any results the sad policeman, brightening up like magic, had charged in, and the next minute he was shoving his way back through the crowd, with Bingo in his right hand and Comrade Butt in his left.

"Let me pass, sir, please," he said, civilly, as he came up against old Bittlesham, who was blocking the gangway.

"Eh?" said old Bittlesham, still dazed.

At the sound of his voice young Bingo looked up quickly from under the shadow of the policeman's right hand, and as he did so all the stuffing seemed to go out of him with a rush. For an instant he drooped like a bally lily, and then shuffled brokenly on. His air was the air of a man who has got it in the neck properly.

SOMETIMES when Jeeves has brought in my morning tea and shoved it on the table beside my bed, he drifts silently from the room and leaves me to go to it: at other times he sort of shimmies respectfully in the middle of the carpet, and then I know that he wants a word or two. On the day after I had got back from Goodwood I was lying on my back, staring at the ceiling, when I noticed that he was still in my midst.

"Oh, hallo," I said. "Yes?"

"Mr Little called earlier in the morning, sir."

"Oh, by Jove, what? Did he tell you about what happened?"

"Yes, sir. It was in connection with that that he wished to see you. He proposes to retire to the country and remain there for some little while."

"Dashed sensible."

"That was my opinion also, sir. There was, however, a slight financial difficulty to be overcome. I took the liberty of advancing him ten pounds on your behalf to meet current expenses. I trust that meets with your approval, sir?"

"Oh, of course. Take a tenner off the dressing-table."

"Very good, sir."

"Jeeves," I said.

"Sir?"

"What beats me is how the dickens the thing happened. I mean, how did the chappie Butt ever get to know who he was?"

Jeeves coughed.

"There, sir, I fear I may have been somewhat to blame."

"You? How?"

"I fear I may carelessly have disclosed Mr. Little's identity to Mr. Butt on the occasion when I had that conversation with him."

I sat up.

"What!"

"Indeed, now that I recall the incident, sir, I distinctly remember saying that Mr. Little's work for the Cause really seemed to me to deserve something in the nature of public recognition. I greatly regret having been the means of bringing about a temporary estrangement between Mr. Little and his lordship. And I am afraid there is another aspect to the matter. I am also responsible for the breaking off of relations between Mr. Little and the young lady who came to tea here."

I sat up again. It's a rummy thing, but the silver lining had absolutely escaped my notice till then.

"Do you mean to say it's off?"

"Completely, sir. I gathered from Mr. Little's remarks that his hopes in the direction may now be looked on as definitely quenched. If there were no other obstacle, the young lady's father, I am informed by Mr. Little, now regards him as a spy and a deceiver."

"Well, I'm dashed!"

"I appear inadvertently to have caused much trouble, sir."

"Jeeves!" I said.

"Sir?"

"How much money is there on the dressing-table?"

"In addition to the ten-pound note which you instructed me to take, sir, there are two five-pound notes, three one-pounds, a ten-shillings, two half-crowns, a florin, four shillings, a sixpence, and a halfpenny, sir."

"Collar it all," I said. "You've earned it."

(Next month: "The Great Sermon Handicap.")

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GOLD THAT GLITTERS

by

PERCEVAL GIBBON

ILLUSTRATED BY E G. OAKDALE

THE tramp who plodded at the road's edge was aware of the car only in time to leap aside as it swished past him, almost brushing his elbow. It was being driven at an insane speed, going like some great canary-coloured projectile, and he had time only to note that its occupants were a monocled youth at the wheel and a gaudy sort of girl at his side, before it took the bend ahead almost on two wheels and vanished. He stared after it with an amaze that soured into resentment.

"The murderin' fools!" he said aloud. "Pity they don't break their bloomin' necks!"

He gathered up the curious contents of the bundle he had let fall in his jump for safety, muttering as he did so. He had found this Kentish main road in general a kindly one; he had obtained lifts on homeward-bound market-wagons, and food of a sort had been plentiful. The canary-coloured car was an outrage; his anger was that of a man whose clear rights have been infringed. He went forward upon his way still breathing desultory maledictions.

"Murderin' fools," he was repeating, as his unhurrying feet brought him to the bend about which the car had disappeared. "Pair of——"

He ceased abruptly; there was no need of further ill-wishing. A hundred yards ahead of him, the car had left the road and charged the ditch that ran beneath the high hedge beside it, and now lay with its near-side wheels crumpled under it, its screen a bristle of shining splinters of glass, and the whole of it a wreck and an ensign of disaster. Upon the grassy bank of the hedge, the pinks and yellows of the girl's attire lay in a tragic and crumpled heap. As the tramp stared, there arose to sight from the other side of the car the overcoated figure of the fool who had driven it, capless now, holding a handkerchief to his face and steadying himself upon his feet with the other hand upon a mud-guard. He seemed to be calling out feebly and inarticulately.

The tramp broke into a run, and soon reached the car. He flung down his bundle and stood looking at the unconscious figure of the girl.

She lay on her back, with her head drooping downwards toward the ditch, cushioned upon the gay-coloured ruin that had been her hat. Upon the pallor of her face the unchanging pink of the cheeks and the hard fixed bow of the mouth stood out like blood-stains, giving to her stillness a very horrid quality of death, and her ungloved hand, outstretched upon the grasses, was splayed as though fixed in a last effort of defence. And with it all there was, for the tramp, at any rate, a special atrocity in the delicate and pretty fashion of all her accoutrement, her luxurious and costly-looking femininity, that should have made her immune from these violences. He looked across at the youth with a savage face.

"Killed 'er, 'ave you?" he said. "Well, you'll be 'ung for it!"

The youth, still pressing the handkerchief to one side of his face, moaned weakly.

"'s my eye," he said, tremulously. "Smashed my glass; 'fraid it's done for! Here!" He detached the hand by which he held on to the car, fumbled at a pocket, and managed to bring forth some loose money. "Go 'n fetch doctor!" he said.

"Go to blazes!" snarled the tramp, and bent to the girl.

He had no notion what to do with her. She showed no obvious wound, but as he raised her so as to lay her with her head uppermost she weighed as lifeless as a shape of stone upon his hands. There were puddles of water in the ditch-bottom; he soaked his neck-cloth in one of these and squeezed it upon her face. Trickles of mud ran here and there and gave to her half-obliterated rouge and powder a new and affrighting ghastliness.

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"Miss," he called to her. "'Ere, miss! Open yer eyes just a minute! Can't you 'ear me, miss?"

But Miss heard nothing. The tramp looked up with a face in which a kind of austerity had replaced all the savage anger of a couple of minutes before.

"You've done it," he said. "The way you was drivin' that car—murder's the only name for it. What was she—your wife?"

Shaken, bruised, and wounded as he was, the youth met the tramp's question with a gape of utter astonishment.

"Wife!" he said. "Wife! Her!"

And actually from under the red and oozing handkerchief there sounded the thin cackle of a laugh.

The tramp stared at him; he was genuinely and deeply shocked. He was no judge of the quality of a woman, but he knew something about men, and it seemed to him that while the girl to whom he had been ministering was pitiful and appealing, the youth who laughed was merely vile and despicable. Words gathered themselves within him tumultuously.

BUT he was saved from the mighty oratory that hovered on his lips. Those broad and easy roads serve many travellers, and from around the bend there came the hum of an approaching car. In a few seconds more it had pulled up beside them, and the two men it contained had sprung out.

"Hallo!" exclaimed one of them. "Bad smash, eh? The lady's injured, I'm afraid."

"The lady's dead!" retorted the tramp, vehemently. "An' 'e"—with a rigid finger pointing in fierce denunciation—"'*e* did it! Drivin' like a madman, 'e was! Nearly run over me, quarter-mile back there."

The man who had spoken looked at him in surprise, with a faintly supercilious cock to his well-shaped brows. But he answered nothing, and suddenly it was borne upon the tramp that these two decent-appearing new arrivals would discount any charges he brought against the youth by his tatters, his uncouth speech, and all his character of one who had no place in their ordered world.

The youth, with his handkerchief still to his face, was dribbling disjointed explanations.

"Tyre burst, I s'pose," he was saying. "Broke my eyeglass in the smash; 'fraid I've lost my eye."

"Let's have a look!" suggested the second of the two newcomers, advancing upon him, while the other knelt down beside the girl. He had taken a flask from his pocket, and went to work to force some of the contents between the slack lips. All of them pointedly disregarded the tramp.

The man who worked over the girl looked up at last.

"I say, Jack!" he called. "I think we'd better get 'em into your car and rush 'em into Maidstone. The lady here—I'm awfully afraid——" A shrug expressed the nature of his fears.

The other agreed. "Yes, an' this eye



"The murderin' fools!" he said aloud. "Pity they don't break their bloomin' necks!"

wants attending to pretty badly," he said. "You hold the lady in the back seat, and we two'll go in front."

And thus it was arranged. It was only when they were all but ready to start that the last speaker took indirect notice of the presence of the tramp. His cool eye dwelt on him appraisingly for a couple of moments; then:—

"Better take the rugs an' things with us," he said. "No use leavin' them to be stolen!"

And when he had piled the movables from the wreck into his own car, he drove off.

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"Well, I'm blowed!" said the tramp, as he stood alone beside the *débris* of the canary-coloured car. "Murder—in broad daylight! But who's goin' to believe me?"

He was assured that no one would. He had not even actually seen the accident take place; and the girl was almost certainly dead, and, therefore, past bearing out his testimony. He shrugged resignedly, and stopped to gather up his bundle again. With his hand upon it he paused, and remained



stooping, staring at something that had fallen among the weeds at the foot of the bank.

"'Ere!" he said. "What's this?"

He reached for it, picked it up, and rose to examine it. It was a brooch, a pretty thing made in the form of a lyre, such as a woman might use to fasten a scarf across her bosom. It twinkled up to his startled eyes from the hollow of his grimed palm, which set off and enhanced its look of useless and lavish costliness.

"Diamonds!" he gasped. "Gold an' diamonds! Must 'ave ripped it off 'er when she fell! Why, 'ere's 'undreds of pounds' worth!"

He turned it back and forth in his big, blunt-ended fingers; and suddenly, with quick, furtive movements of the head, he glanced about him lest anyone should be watching. It was at that moment that the thing became his, a means towards plenty and pleasure. He thrust it deep into his pocket and took his bundle in hand.

His conscience troubled him not at all. James Webb, from time to time deck-hand on Thames barges, dock-labourer, Jack-of-all-trades upon many water-sides, and now, since the spring was fine and the summer promised well, a tramp of the southern

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counties of England, was so little a thief in the grain that he was genuinely unaware that he was stealing at all. The girl was dead, so she didn't own it; she wasn't the young fool's wife, so *he* didn't own it; and, anyhow, a thing picked up in the grass like that—it was a gift tossed to him by sheer circumstance. Only—it was a thing to keep quiet about, lest it should be taken away from him.

He arrived in Maidstone soon after noon. A large policeman looked searchingly and disapprovingly at him as he slouched past. He saw the glance, and stiffened defensively, as though the official eye could see through the stuff of his warm corduroys to the treasure in his pocket. He knew what he wanted, and presently he found it—the plate-glass front of the town's chief jeweller.

Most of the articles were ticketed with their prices, but a few of the larger pieces, set forth on pads of white velvet, were unmarked. It was one of the latter that gained his attention, a heart-shaped pendant crusted with brilliants. Mentally he compared it with the brooch in his pocket.

"Not 'arf as many diamonds nor yet not such big ones. Wonder why they don't stick the price on it?"

For that was his purpose, to gain some idea as to the value of his find ready for the time when he should turn it into cash. He frowned thoughtfully at the bright window, and was suddenly aware of a dapper assistant within watching him suspiciously through the glass of the door. Upon a sudden impulse he pointed with a finger to the diamond heart, and beckoned the assistant forth with his head.

The assistant stared a moment, then jerked open the door and stood upon the threshold, eyeing him from head to foot.

"What d'you want?" he demanded.

Webb again pointed to the little heart behind the glass. "Mister," he inquired, "what's the worth o' that heart-thing you got there? You ain't put no price on it."

"That! You thinking of buying it?" queried the other.

"Not without knowin' the price, any'ow," retorted Webb.

The jeweller's shopman sniffed. "Better treat yourself to something cheaper, my man," he said, loftily. "That heart is worth"—he hesitated, and decided to be crushing while he was about it, and a big lie costs no more than a little one—"it's worth a cool thousand pounds, that is! Are you sure you won't take a couple of 'em?"

"Thousand——" To the jeer Webb replied nothing at all. He backed away from the little shopman as though in fear. He backed till he had reached the farther edge of the side-walk; then, with a last scared look at the triumphant jester, he turned and blundered on up the street. For he had believed utterly. The capricious and unaccountable fortune that will enrich a man one day and undo him the next had singled him out for this stupendous gift, and it frightened him.

He had an urgent need to look upon his wealth again. He found a quiet spot in a big street and, with much precautions against possible spies, he drew it forth. It was as he had thought; it had many more and much larger stones than the thousand-pound heart; altogether there was twice as much of mere mass to it. It might even be worth two thousand. He swore reverently as he reflected upon it.

"But it'll take some gettin' rid of," he warned himself. "Can't go into a pawnshop like this an' ask 'em for thousands o' pounds. I—I got to get some different clo'es."

He surveyed himself and frowned in thought. It was impossible plausibly to connect the figure which he cut in his own eyes with the Eldorado which beckoned to him. Pawnshops, as he knew them, were the very homes and headquarters of suspicion and distrust; and he had no idea of how to find the discreet dealers in stolen goods who give a value for value and ask no questions. "I *got* to get some different clo'es," he repeated to himself, and had a vision of himself nobly clad, armoured against the doubts of usurers, laying down his treasure confidently upon a counter whence presently he picked up its price in handful after handful of spendable money.

"An' that means gettin' a job," was his conclusion. "Couple o' months—or p'r'aps three—ought to do it. Can't go an' miss a chance like this 'ere!"

He listed his meditative head; his programme was made. The blind brick walls about him alone were witnesses to the stiffening of resolution that ran through him and made of the drooping tramp a man with a direction and a purpose.

IT was late evening ere he completed the journey on foot over the hill-road that links Maidstone with Chatham; his instinct led him unerringly towards the waterside now that work was in question. And the same instinct, like that of a homing bird, led him to a suitably mean street and to a correspondingly unpretentious public-house. In a stuffy little compartment not much bigger than a telephone call-box he laid his bundle down and demanded beer and bread and cheese.

"Come far?" asked the girl, who pushed the tankard towards him, with perfunctory civility.

He nodded. "Walked over from Maidstone," he answered. Now that he was in search of work there was no need to tell her

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more. She was a large and buxom girl, with a mild and pleasant face and something of directness and simplicity in her regard. She picked up the shilling which he laid down and moved towards the cash-register at the back of the bar.

"Here! Let's 'ave a look at that!" A harsh voice arrested her. Webb, lowering his tankard at the sound of it, was aware of a shirt-sleeved man behind the bar who held out his hand for the shilling which he had just paid over. He took the coin from the girl's hand, examined it, and rang it twice on the bar.

"All right!" he said then, restored it to her, gave Webb a glance that seemed to challenge him to make any comment on the matter, and moved away.

"What was all that?" Webb asked the girl when she returned with his change.

She gave a wry little smile. "There's a lot o' bad money about lately," she said. "I took a bad half-crown this morning—at least, he says it was me."

"Was it you?" asked Webb.

"I don't know. But I know I got to pay for it," she answered. "Either that or pass it off on someone else. An', o' course, I can't do that."

"But someone passed it on you," said Webb.

She nodded, resignedly. "That's what *he* says," she answered. "But I couldn't do that."

She spoke with such a tranquil conviction that Webb had no reply. He did not altogether understand, but he was impressed, none the less. In her place he would have seen no evil in passing on his loss to another; but he liked the steadfastness of honesty that went so well with her quiet and patient eyes.

He had the good fortune to find employment the following morning. A wharf extension was building, and before noon he was one of a gang of men at work unloading stone from a flotilla of lighters for the construction. It was not easy nor agreeable work; the stuff had to be piled by hand into barrows and taken ashore over plank gangways—a day-long monotony of lifting and hauling that tired his slackened muscles to the utmost. The dinner-hour found him already stiff and aching, with a powerful inclination to leave the job and depart again to the freedom and ease of the roads, the variety and interest of tramping. But upon rising that morning in the common lodging-house where he had slept he had pinned the brooch within the waistband of his trousers, where a hand thrust through the belt could feel its presence. He felt for it now, while he sat upon a stone heap and ate the food he had brought with him, and the touch of it was sufficient to restore his resolution.

AND the end of the day also brought its reward, in the sense of satisfaction that in the fruit of a task accomplished and also in the knowledge that some sixth of a week's wages was earned towards the achievement of his purpose. He sat that evening in the general kitchen of the lodging-house, his elbow upon the table, his head in his hand, and reviewed once more the prospect that opened before him. Tramps, labourers, and the like were busy about him with talk, and cooking; but he saw nothing of them. He was gazing beyond them to where there moved, against an indeterminate background, an impressively clad figure to which all the world was a buyable chattel. It rode in cabs, it refreshed itself frequently, it laboured not at all. It was comely and clever; it was himself as he would be.

He saw no more of the girl who had first greeted him on his arrival in Chatham till his wages had been paid him on the following Saturday. His programme of thrift allowed him little to spend upon mere indulgences, but his days of work and his evenings in the foul and noisy kitchen had left him a little lonely, and he had a pressing need for a while of companionship. The shabby little bar seemed to him cosy and hospitable, and the sight of the girl, large and serious and kindly, gave him an odd sense of respite from the rigour of his purpose. Moreover, the fact that she recognized him warmed him with a feeling of welcome.

"Found work?" she inquired.

"Yes, I got a job," he answered. "I'll likely be 'ere two or three months, now."

She smiled. She had a slow and kindly smile that he found pleasant to see. "You'll be in here sometimes, then?" she suggested.

He nodded. "Sure to be," he agreed. "Ain't got nowhere else to go. An' you? Been takin' any more bad money lately?"

Her smile faded at that. "I don't know how it 'appens," she said, dolefully. "I'm sure I'm as careful as I can be. But it keeps comin' in. Another half-crown an' a two-shillin'-piece—an' I've got to make it good!"

"It's a shame," said Webb, warmly. "Must be some feller that's got you marked down. Why don't you go to the police an' 'ave them put a detective on."

She sighed. "The landlord's done that a'ready," she answered. "But it *is* a shame. It isn't only that I got to lose by it; but to think there's a man like that goin' about! It makes you sick—feedin' himself an' buyin' his drinks with money that don't belong to him! Wouldn't you rather starve?"

"I'd like to catch 'im," said Webb. "That's what I'd like to do. He wouldn't pass no more bad money for a bit, I'll bet. But why should *you* 'ave to pay?"

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She made a helpless gesture with her hands. "It's that or get the sack," she said. "I got five of 'em now that I've 'ad to pay for."

"Let's 'ave a look," he suggested.

She felt in her pocket and produced an envelope and emptied its contents on the bar. There were three half-crowns and two florins. Webb picked up one of the former and examined it curiously.

"'E's a clever workman, whoever 'e is," he commented. "You could pass one o' these on me any time an' I'd never know. 'Ardly anybody'd know. A man 'ud take it an' go off an' spend it and not be any the worse." He was watching her as he spoke; she only nodded regretfully. "What you goin' to do with 'em?" he asked.

She shook her head. "I don't know," she said. "Try an' put 'em where nobody'll ever find 'em, I suppose."

"Throw 'em in the river, perhaps," he suggested, half-facetiously. "I'm workin' down there; 'ow'd you like me to take 'em an' heave 'em in for you?"

He had not imagined for an instant that she would accept his offer, but to his astonishment she smiled almost eagerly.

"Will you?" she said. "Do! Then I'll know they can't do no more harm."

He stared at her. "You mean it?" he demanded.

She seemed not to understand. "'Course I mean it," she protested.

"Right!" said Webb. "I'll do it." And he swept up those plausible tokens of value and dropped them into his jacket-pocket.

IT was policy as well as a sense of humour that prompted him in his manner of disposing of them, for he was anxious that she should have independent testimony that he had really thrown them into the river. The dinner-hour on Monday was reaching its end and the men were sitting about among the stone-heaps, smoking and awaiting the summons to renew work. Webb, sitting among them, dropped a hand to his trousers pocket and brought out the coins and inspected them as they lay in his hand.

"Hallo, Jim!" called one of the others. "Been robbin' a till or what?"

The rest of them turned to look. Webb smiled at them.

"Can any o' you fellers swim an' dive?" he asked. "'Cos if so, I'll make it worth your while."

"How?" came the chorused query.

"Like this," he answered, rising to his feet. He took one of the half-crowns between finger and thumb and held it forth for them to see. Then, while they watched him breathlessly, he flung the broad coin forth over the water. It sparkled in a long arc and hit the surface fifty yards away.

"What yer doin', yer fool?" yelled somebody. Webb grinned at him and a second coin followed the first. "'E's mad!" cried another, and rose as though to prevent him, but the third and fourth coins went the way of the others. He backed away from the man who would restrain him.

"Only this left," he cried. "Pity to keep it all by itself, ain't it?" And the last of the coins spun forth and plopped into the river.

The men stared at him as he went back to his seat upon the stones and resumed his pipe. For every one of them, the sum he had thrown away was considerable.

"Well!" commented one, expelling a deep breath. "Jim's mad, an' that's all about it! Or else 'e's come into a fortune."

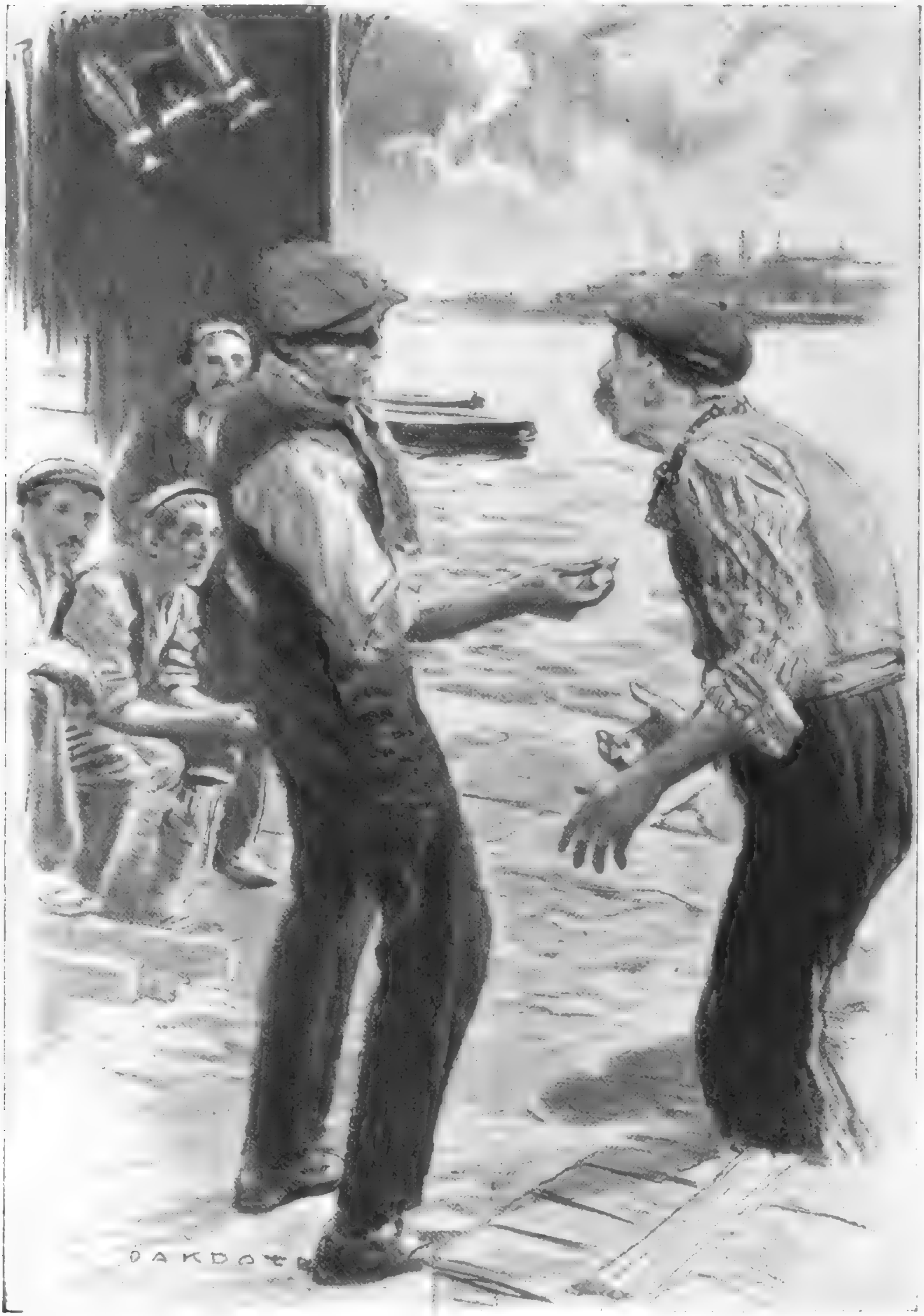
Webb had his hands tucked into his belt; beneath the fingers of one lay the little jewelled lyre. He smiled again.

If he wanted publicity for his disposal of the coins he assuredly got it in the amplest measure. By evening he was notorious along the waterside; and when, next morning, he offered the explanation of his action, he was scarcely less famous. But when next he visited the public-house the girl greeted him with a smile of merry appreciation.

It came to be almost his only recreation, the glass of beer and the hour of chat with her across the bar in the intervals of her service. Week followed week, and his visits had the quality of ritual. The tale of his savings grew; he reached the point at which he was able to calculate the date when he would be able to leave the dull toil of his employment and go to London to realize upon his wealth. His resolution in this respect had never faltered; it was always in London that he had glimpsed his gilded future. Not even his genuine liking for the girl could shake his determination to be done with Chatham as soon as his plans should be ripe. Twice again he threw away base coins for her, and the fact of her fixed and unalterable honesty, a quality as constant in the make-up of her mind as the shape of her features in the contours of her face, became less marvellous to him.

The climax of their acquaintance came one evening when he entered the little bar to find no other customer there. "Evenin', miss," he greeted, as usual, and ordered his very modest drink. She smiled at him, the slowly-widening and friendly smile for which he had come to look, filled his glass, and set it down before him. He thrust a ten-shilling note across in payment and she turned to get change from the cash-register behind her. At the same moment the shirt-sleeved and pot-bellied landlord bustled to the machine and began to work upon it.

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He took one of the half-crowns between finger and thumb. "Can any o' you fellers swim an' dive? 'Cos, if so, I'll make it worth your while."

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" 'Ow much ? " he demanded, taking the note from the girl. " Right ! " He struck the appropriate key and handed her a little pile of silver and coppers in return. She passed it to Webb, who pocketed it and leaned against the counter chatting, till it was time to push his glass over to be replenished. He paid for it this time with a half-crown that he fished at random from his pocket. And, as on the evening of his first visit, the landlord intercepted the girl and took the coin from her.

" 'Ere ! " he demanded suddenly of Webb. " What's this you're tryin' on ? "

He bounced the coin upon the bar ; it rang as flat as lead. His little eyes were savage as he glared at Webb.

" What yer talkin' about ? " retorted Webb. " If it ain't good, that's your look out. You give it me in my change for me last drink. I 'adn't no other 'arf-crown on me ! "

The landlord pushed the coin over to him. " You look out I don't call a p'liceman," he threatened. " I 'anded out yer last change meself, and there warn't no 'arf-crowns among it. You pick up yer 'ome-made money an' pay for yer beer, will yer ? "

" I tell you I got it from you ! " insisted Webb.

" Miss ! " The pot-bellied man turned to where the girl stood behind him, looking on and listening. Webb could no longer see his face when he turned, nor the warning and commanding wink with which he prompted her. But over the bulging shoulder he could see her face and its trouble.

" Miss ! You 'anded 'im the change I give yer," barked the fat man. " Speak up ; you're witness there wasn't no 'arf-crown in it, was there ? "

She did not answer at first, but stood nervously tangling her fingers before her.

" Speak up ! " ordered the landlord. " Got a tongue in yer 'ead, 'aven't yer ? Tell 'im there wasn't none ! "

There was another pause; then she sighed.

" Yes, there was," she answered, in her mild and steady voice.

The landlord swore, and she shrank back from him. Webb laughed, but he was thrilled, too. He knew he might safely have counted upon it, but it was yet stimulating and heart-warming to watch her unswerving truth at work.

" Now's the time to send for a policeman," he jeered. " Unless, p'r'aps, you'd like me to fetch one."

The landlord gave him a ferocious look and banged down a sound coin in place of the imposture which yet lay on the bar.

" You'll clear out to-morrow, *you* will," he rasped at the girl. " 'Ad enough o' *your* tricks, I 'ave."

And he stamped his indignant way towards his den of an office, and left them together.

THEY stood, one to each side of the pewter-topped counter, and looked at each other. The girl's eyes were wet with distress.

" Oh ! " she broke out. " What does he want me to do things like that for ? It's like—it's like—stealin' ; I can't bear them. An' now I've got to go, an' I don't know what I'm goin' to do."

" Hush ! " said Webb. " It's my turn to stand by you now. I never saw nobody like you. I don't believe you could do a dirty thing if you tried. Supposin', now—supposin' you an' me was to fix up together ! I bin savin' money all the weeks I bin 'ere, an' soon I'll 'ave more—'eaps an' 'eaps more. We'd go to London ; p'r'aps we c'd even 'ave a pub of our own. What say ? "

She looked at him steadily. " You mean —get married ? "

He nodded. Then, misreading her silence, he leaned across the bar and, in tones little louder than a whisper, he told her the story of the accident on the Maidstone road, of his find, of his plan and his prospects. And to clinch his tale he fumbled within his waistband, pricked his finger on the pin of the brooch, and managed to extract it. He showed it to her, lying gleaming in the cup of his hand.

" A thousand pounds—any'ow," he said. " Think—a thousand pounds ! "

He heard her gasp, and looked quickly up at her face. What he saw there made his jaw drop.

" *You !* " she breathed, in a sort of incredulity of horror. " You—like all the others ! And I did think you were decent an' honest ! I was just goin' to—— "

She broke off abruptly.

" But what's the matter ? " he demanded. " 'Tisn't as if I'd stole it. There it was, lyin' in the grass for anybody to pick up. An' the woman was dead."

She shook her head. " But it ain't yours," she said. " You ought to have taken it to the police-station. But to keep it like that an' to ask me to come an' live on it—oh, it's wrong, it's all wrong."

There was always that confident assurance, that trenchant discrimination between clear right and clear wrong, in her manner and voice. He was unutterably abashed.

" Then—then you won't——."

She shook her head again. " I couldn't," she said, decidedly. " I'd rather starve, an' I *did* think you would, too."

She turned away, and he, leaving his drink untasted, turned in silence to the door.

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IT was twenty minutes later that a sturdy young man in worn working clothes, and with a face whose hard seriousness imperfectly masked a certain trepidation, made his way to the desk of the sergeant on duty at the police-station.

"Well?" inquired that officer, briefly.

For answer the young man slapped down upon the desk a trinket that winked in the electric light.

"'Ad any inquiries 'bout this bein' lost?" he asked.

The stout sergeant examined it with interest. "Where'd you get it?" he said.

James Webb told him the story.

"Ah!" said the sergeant. "An' you've been holdin' on to it in case a reward was offered, eh? You might 'ave got into trouble over that, you know. 'Owever—Billings!"

A young constable came forward. The sergeant handed him the brooch.

"Take that across the road to the jeweller's an' ask 'em what they think of it."

James Webb was given the seat by the fire vacated by Billings, and sat staring moodily at the coals till the policeman returned and dropped the brooch on the sergeant's desk.

"Well?"

Billings grinned, with a sidelong glance at the listening Webb.

> "'Ere!" the landlord demanded suddenly of Webb. "What's this you're tryin' on?" He bounced the coin upon the bar; it rang as flat as lead.

"Says he'll sell you them by the dozen at ten shillings apiece."

Webb breathed deeply. Without a word he took the brooch which the smiling sergeant handed to him, and went forth. He passed slowly in the direction of the little inn.

"I'll get her to teach me that honesty trick of 'ers," he said. "I cert'ny ain't no good at the other thing!"

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HOW TO MAKE THE BEST OF LIFE

by

Arnold Bennett

I.—TEMPERAMENT AND HABITS.

DEALING WITH THE TEMPERAMENT.

TO make the best of life it is absolutely necessary to satisfy, without over-indulging, your temperament. This is the most important thing of all. Reason is excellent, reason is admirable; but it is not, and should not be, the sole guide of life; and those wondrous persons who invariably act according to the dictates of reason are usually enormous bores, disagreeable, priggish, and without imagination. Fortunately there are very few of them.

To say that man is a reasoning animal is a poetical extravagance. Man is sometimes a reasoning animal. But he is a temperamental animal all the time. He is born with a certain temperament; it never stops influencing him; it is like the influence of the wind or the tide on a ship, except that its influence is always, always in the same direction. No man can change his temperament, and scarcely any man succeeds in modifying it in the slightest degree. When you are born you are done for, in the matter of temperament. The colour of your eyes may alter, generally does; but your temperament won't. It will show itself in your last breath. This may be regrettable, but it is so, and the fact should be faced. Arrange your existence, or let others arrange it for you, without fully consulting your temperament, and there will be trouble. Make an enemy of your temperament, and you will make the worst of life. The temperament is bound to win, and you will array the forces of reason against it in vain. In such combats reason is a bow-and-arrow soldier and temperament is a tank. Therefore



Reason and Temperament.

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However young you are, and however wise and bald and ponderous your advisers——

come to terms with your temperament, and however young you are, and however wise and bald and ponderous your advisers, let no one set you permanently on a path to which it objects.

By temperament I mean the general bent and character of a man's vitality. Some men are born to command, others—and by far the greater number—to obey. Some men love responsibility; the vast majority of us hate it; in the late war there were at least five millions of armed Britons who loathed responsibility like the pest, but that was a temporary phenomenon. Some men are passionate; more are fishes. Some men must have change, of place, of action, of aim; others desire only to do the same thing at the same time every day—the season-ticket-holders of life. Some men prefer to work alone, others prefer to be surrounded by their fellows who are doing just what they themselves are doing. Some men prefer not to work at all. But beware of saying that a man is temperamentally idle. It may happen that a man is idle for years and then bursts into a prolonged fever of activity; and this may be due to a change in his bodily condition, or to the sudden victory of a temperament that had been thwarted. Some men are ambitious; the majority are not. And a good thing, too! For a world full of Napoleons would soon be a world full of corpses and one Napoleon, who would have no subjects except subjects for dissection.

It is needless to give further examples of different temperaments. I have suggested some of the most striking contrasts in them. There are hundreds more, and each reader can find his own. Every temperament is a paramount fact, exceeding and surpassing reason. Must a man, then, yield himself completely to his temperament? Certainly he must not. Although no lasting happiness can be attained if the temperament is utterly thwarted, on the other hand a total surrender to temperament is likely to result in both individual and general unhappiness. Perhaps in a few cases the temperament is wholly good; perhaps in a few it is wholly evil. But most temperaments have in them the seeds of both good and evil.

Temperaments have to be checked, like parliamentary majorities and other tyrants. You cannot overthrow them at will, but you can keep them in order, and the business of the reasoning faculty is to keep them in order. A man's temperament may urge him to appropriate other people's property without leave and without paying for it. He is called a thief if he is poor, and she is called a kleptomaniac if she is rich. The consequences of not putting a curb on such a temperament will be evil all round; but happily society takes this temperament in hand, and, while the temperament is never thereby altered, the natural results of it are in a measure averted. The temperament which urges its possessor always to give is less fortunate; society will not interfere with it, and indeed it is encouraged in excess on all sides and works much harm. But as a rule the evil possibilities of a temperament are perceived with some clearness by its possessor and with more clearness by his friends; and reason has a fair chance of avoiding disastrous and absolute defeat in the battle with its powerful adversary.

The answer to the question: "How far must a temperament be checked?" is: "You have got to judge for yourself."

All one may safely say is that a temperament cannot be advantageously scotched and it cannot advantageously be given full liberty. Between these two extremes

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common sense must draw a line. Vague and difficult advice, you say! Yes! But life itself is vague and difficult.

THE CHOICE OF A CAREER.

It is in the choice of a career that the first great reckoning with temperament must occur. Of this crisis in life two things are to be said. It is of tremendous, overwhelming importance; and the difficulty of it can scarcely be exaggerated. Frightful and tragic mistakes are made; yet the marvel is not that the mistakes are so numerous, but that they are so few. Neither the parent nor the youth is properly qualified to give a decision. Parents have a wonderful way of forgetting how they felt when they were young. Parents have also a wonderful way of repeating the errors which their elders committed in regard to themselves. Parents, like other human beings, habitually mistake



A thief if he is poor—a kleptomaniac if she is rich.

their own preferences and desires for the voice of omniscient wisdom. Parents seldom study the psychology of their children. Parents are apt to hold the singular belief that they have conferred a benefit on their children by bringing them into the world, and that therefore their children owe them all sorts of heavy debts, including blind obedience. It is no uncommon sight to see a parent who has made a horrid mess of his own life assuming quite blandly the *rôle* of an autocratic Solomon to his son.

On the other hand, if parents know little of youths, youths often know no more of themselves. Their temperaments may not be even half developed at the moment of the choice, for not infrequently, since the method of education may depend on the career chosen, the choice must be made at an extremely early age. Again, the youth may accept a passing caprice for a permanent temperamental bent. The chances are ten to one that he is attracted by externals and inessentials. Almost certainly the youth, like the parent, will be influenced by circumstances which facilitate the apprenticeship to a career, regardless of the fact that in life the early difficulties are trifles compared with the later. The business of youth is to conquer difficulties; the business of age is to avoid them. To shirk responsibilities in youth is to create difficulties for age. It is a form of cowardice. And whereas apprenticeship lasts only a few years, a baulked temperament irritates day and night till the grave.

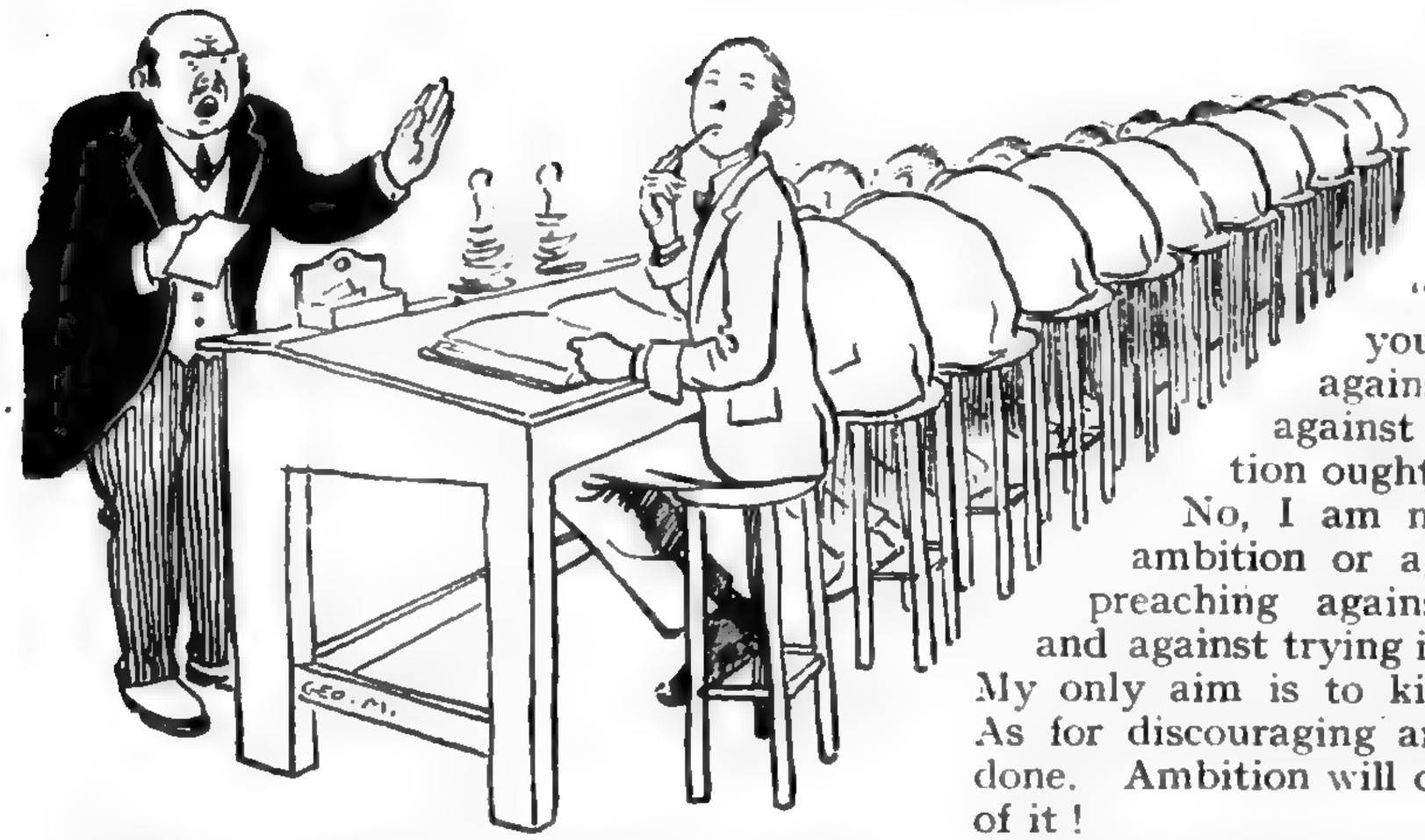
"I am a lawyer," says the parent. "I have a good practice. You will succeed to it. It is ready made for you. What in the name of common sense is all this silly talk about wanting to be an engineer? I never heard such rubbish."

Reason thinks it has vanquished temperament, but temperament is a vindictive and satanic creature. It never really yields, never forgives. It will have its revenge, assuredly on the youth, possibly on both the youth and the parent.

At the root of many blunders in the choice of a career is the almost universal assumption that the youth is ambitious. I have already said that the majority are not, but the statement needs some explanation. Nearly all decent youths think they are ambitious, and they are encouraged in this notion by parents, who are unable to believe that the progeny which *they* have begotten and conceived is not remarkable. And undoubtedly nearly all decent youths would like to be brilliantly successful, to stand out from their fellows, to be rich and powerful, to command luxuries.

But there is a difference between this vague longing, which comes and goes, and which every one of us has felt, and the continuous, urgent, acute desire to get on. He who wishes the end wishes the means to the end. The means to the realization of ambition are initiative, enterprise, resource,

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Frightful and tragic mistakes are made.

tireless energy, invincible optimism, and egotism. How many individuals genuinely want to make the sacrifices and to expend the energy required for the realization of ambition? Exceedingly few. Ambition is like seven devils with whips thrashing you forward. It brings happiness only in so far as it satisfies a temperamental instinct. Those who are ambitious, and successfully so, are not happier than those who satisfy their temperaments in any other way.

And yet parents will persuade youths, and youths will persuade themselves, to launch upon difficult and hazardous careers demanding qualities which the said youths obviously do not possess—simply because of the delusion that to be ambitious is necessarily laudable! Too often a parent who himself has not been successfully ambitious will try, for egotistic reasons, to realize an ambition vicariously through his son, regardless of the son's temperament.

"I have failed. You must succeed."

The parent is applauded, and unquestionably there is good in the idea; nevertheless, the parent may be committing a crime against the son.

I agree that it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. But, though it is a good thing to try, I do not agree that it is a good thing to try for that which you lack the machinery to attain. Failure has consequences. If nothing succeeds like success, nothing fails like failure. Failure may permanently injure the *moral* of a man. It may render even minor successes impossible in the future. Failure should never be carelessly risked, any more than typhoid fever. Nobody is the same after it.

"Here is this fellow," you exclaim, "preaching against ambition and against trying! Surely ambition ought to be encouraged!"

No, I am not preaching against ambition or against trying! I am preaching against spurious ambition and against trying in the wrong direction. My only aim is to kill dangerous illusions. As for discouraging ambition, it cannot be done. Ambition will out—if there is enough of it!

Fewer mistakes, with fewer suppressed or expressed tragedies, would occur in the choice of careers if the people chiefly concerned—the youth and his advisers or his autocrats—would begin by considering the general qualities of the youth instead of the advantages of any particular career. That is to say, if they would argue from generals to particulars and not from particulars to generals. The great majority of youths would do equally well, or equally badly, in half-a-dozen different vocations, provided all these vocations fall within a certain range. If a youth shows an aptitude for retail trade (a most fascinating affair), it doesn't matter much whether he retails grocery, drapery,



Those who are ambitious, and successfully so, are not happier than those who satisfy their temperaments in any other way.

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tobacco and cigars, cutlery, or children's toys. And if he has a childless uncle in the drapery trade but manifests a leaning towards grocery, then he will be well advised to lean at once the other way towards drapery; his temperament will not be thereby thwarted with fatal results.

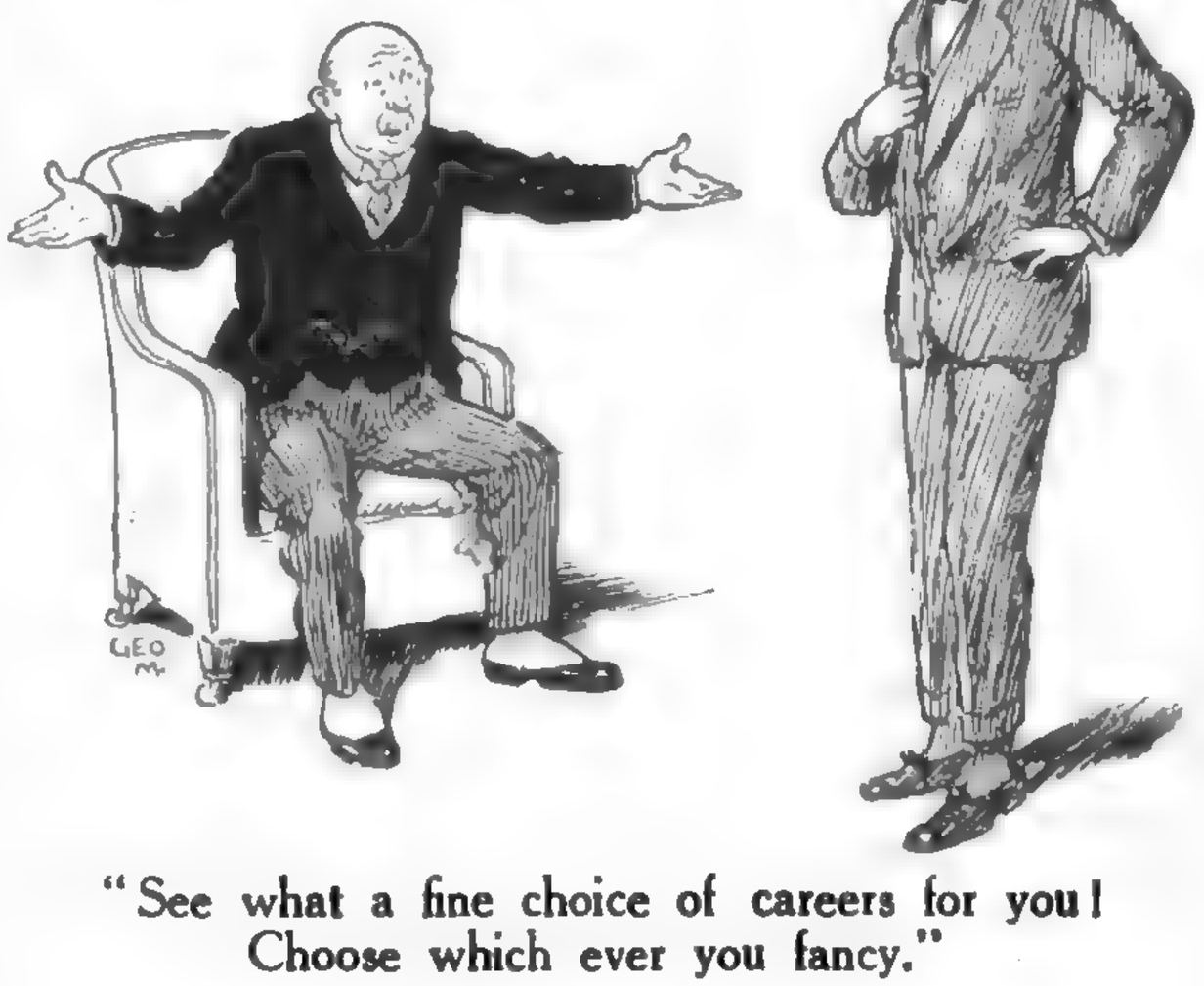
If, on the other hand, the youth has an itch for wandering, little notion of time, a distaste for routine, a disgust for pen and ink—(such deplorable persons do unfortunately exist and occasionally, of course by mere fluke, they build empires)—then it is perfectly futile to say to him :—

"Now your father is branch manager of a bank; your uncle is accountant in an insurance office; your godfather is a limpet in Whitehall; and your Aunt Lucy's cousin has considerable influence in the Tramways Department of the London County Council. See what a fine choice of careers for you! Choose which ever you fancy. We will leave you perfectly free to pick."

You might as usefully leave him free to kill himself by drowning, hanging, ball-cartridge, or whisky. You and he must positively first discover what his qualities and what his defects are, and then afterwards gaze around for the vocations in which the qualities would help towards success and the defects be relatively harmless. And you must rule out all vocations, however brilliant and promising, in which the qualities of the youth would be valueless and the defects disastrous.

There are two sorts of cases, one rare, the other frequent, in which the choice gives rise to little trouble. The first is that of the youth whose temperament is so powerfully inclined in a particular direction that he knows infallibly what he wants and takes care that everybody else shall know it too. The choice is made from the very start. Trouble of course may arrive in giving effect to it; but however grave such trouble may be the youth should count himself fortunate. He has been blessed above his fellows. His temperament simply refuses to be baulked, and real failure cannot overtake him.

The second sort is that of the youth who doesn't much mind what he is put to, since he has no strong preferences and a temperament that is without intensity. This sort of man abounds in the land and in all lands. He does not live, but exists. He is not unhappy. He is certainly far less unhappy than the man who, possessing a marked temperament, has not been able to humour it, has made an enemy of it. But he knows nothing of the deep, natural satisfactions of the other man who is doing all the time precisely the thing that he was born to do and that he can do well. This man has the tide with him and the wind, all the forces of Nature with him, and he alone is genuinely alive and making the best possible of life.



"See what a fine choice of careers for you! Choose which ever you fancy."

A WORD TO THE AMBITIOUS.

Strange as it may seem, the ambitious, energetic man has a rather important lesson to learn from the common person who contentedly stays in the groove to which destiny appointed him. Not one ambitious man in a hundred ever learns this lesson or even dreams in his arrogance that the fellow over whose head he is climbing has anything to teach him.

The ambitious man seeks after one of three prizes, sometimes after two of them, sometimes after all three: power, money, knowledge. These commodities take a lot of getting. Half a life, three-quarters of a life, may be consumed in getting them. The eyes of the ambitious man are therefore fixed upon a distant goal. His gaze never leaves the goal, and the narrow, difficult path leading up to it. He becomes a man of one idea, which all his activities must subserve. Time is precious; at first he dare not waste it; then he loses the desire to waste it; finally he hates to waste it and cannot bring himself to waste it. His habits are definitely formed, and fixed habits are to wrought iron what wrought iron is to putty. They can be neither bent nor broken; they develop

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into the prison-cell of the man who has formed them.

He attains his ambition; perhaps he is fifty years of age; he may be fifty-five or sixty. He is incapable immediately of believing that he has attained it; but at length he does realize the enormous fact.



"I wish to heaven my master hadn't lost me."

"I have arrived!" he says to himself, incredulous, and he has to repeat and repeat: "I have arrived! I have arrived! I have arrived!"

Then he says to himself:—



The ambitious man says to himself: "I have arrived!"

"There is no longer any need for me to toil as I have toiled, nor to confine my interests as I have hitherto confined them. I will relax. I will enlarge my interests. I will let myself go. I will catch pleasure as it flies."

And, being a man of decision, he retires to bed one night with the firm resolution to start the new life the next morning. And he can't start the new life the next morning. He is just like a dog who has lost his master. His master was the terrific inducement to work. The inducement has vanished. He thinks boldly:—

"My master was a tyrant, grotesquely addicted to discipline, cruel, hard to please, with no real understanding of dogs. Good riddance to him! I am my own master now. I will have a devil of a time."

He wags a foolish tail, trots aimlessly here and there, sees and smells nothing of exciting interest, is disillusioned, drops off to sleep in the roadway, and has a narrow escape of being killed by a motor-car. At last he thinks:—

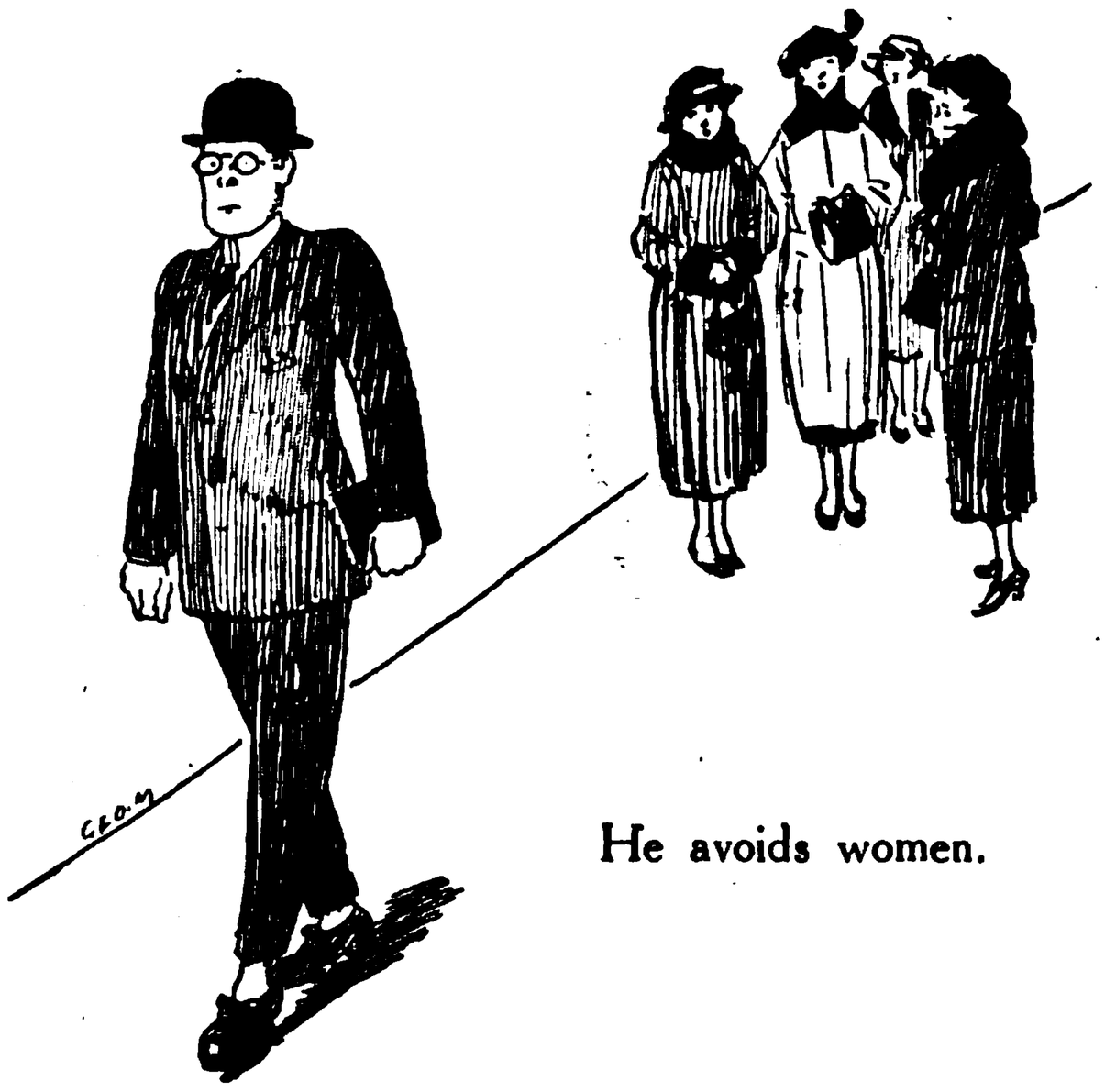
"I wish to heaven my master hadn't lost me," and falls to envying all the other dogs who are following obediently at the heels of cruel tyrants.

The common world beholds the victim of great success and exclaims:—

"This man has attained all that he wanted. He wears a grim face. Why is he not uproariously happy?"

And well may the common world ask the question! The answer, however, is easy. The man is not happy

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He avoids women.

because, having disposed of his object in life, he has no other genuine interests, and because he is the slave of his austere habits—habits not only of action but of thought. For half a century he has been living in the future; now he would live in the present and cannot. For half a century he has eschewed the common world; now he would rejoin the mass of mankind, but finds that he is out of touch with it. His existence is drawing inexorably to a close. Nobody can say that he has wasted it, or that he has not had the immense satisfactions that spring from the full and successful exercise of unusually fine faculties.

But has he made the best of life? The proof that he has not is clear enough in the simple fact that his chief sensation is a feeling of disappointment. He has lived, and lived intensely, yet the cry in his heart is :—

"I want to begin to live, and somehow I can't."

He has lived intensely, but not fully. He has spent two-thirds of his life in making himself what amounts to a monomaniac, and the impossibility of undoing that sinister work desolates and dejects him.

There is more in life than the successful exercise of the dominant faculties, supremely important as this is. And the ambitious man should strive, while he is yet young, to fix in his superior noddle that the dominant faculties are not everything, neither are they sufficient to themselves. The ambitious youth pegs himself down to his special work. He labours morning, afternoon, and evening. He bars out the world. He has no time for the world and rather scorns it. He avoids women, adopting a somewhat condescending attitude towards them, as if saying :—

"Girls are all right in their place, but I am called to a higher fate, and have no leisure for gewgaws of any description."

He is a monk under a rule as stern as that of the Trappists. His industry is as overwhelming as the Falls of Niagara, and the shaken beholder marvels and admires and says :—

"Here is the model young man."

And the model young man fancies himself, and indeed has some grounds for fancying himself. But he thinks that he is doing a very fine thing, an unexceptionably fine thing, and what he is doing is not unexceptionably fine. Exception can and must be taken to it.

He should consider the mediocre people, those lilies of the field. They toil little; they spin little; but they are not cut off. If they do not live for the future they at any rate live in the present, and they try their best to obtain some distraction every day. It cannot be denied that they waste time and waste it deliberately. Now to waste a certain amount of time is excellent, just as to waste a certain amount of money is excellent. The man who looks twice at every halfpenny and at every half-hour is as vast a nuisance as he who invariably follows the dictates of reason. Think of a world in which all waste was rigorously suppressed. It would be a terrible world. Yes, a moderate amount of waste—of time, money, brains—is a valuable, an indispensable factor in a soundly organized existence. Waste is generally another name for distraction, and distraction —distraction without an aim, distraction for its own sake—is essential to right living.

If a man does not acquire the habit of distraction when young, he is making trouble for his age. A schoolboy learns how to be a man, and a man should learn how to be an old man. How shall he *enjoy* unless he practises the art and craft of enjoyment? "I enjoy my work," you say. Yes, we know all about that, but the enjoyment of work is not the kind of enjoyment I mean. I mean the kind of enjoyment that unbends the mind. Many ambitious men never really unbend their minds for thirty years. Then, when they have achieved, they find that "heaven has been pleased to give them nuts to crack after their teeth are gone." A fate that seldom happens to the ordinary man!

I do not wish to extol the ordinary man. He is all right and very necessary to the scheme of things, but the ambitious man is

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a better. Only, the ordinary man succeeds in this one particular where the other too frequently fails. He spreads pleasure pretty evenly through his whole life. He doesn't deprive himself for forty years in order to have an indigestible surfeit for ten years. And he has had the wit to discover that women, in spite of all that is said against them, are civilizing to the male and the unrivalled unbenders of the masculine mind.

Naturally, the ambitious man will not imitate the unambitious. But he might deign to take a hint from the unambitious. He might go a little way in imitation; he might effect some compromise between living in the present and living in the future. He will object that he has not the time. The objection is overruled. There is something wrong with a scheme which renders life incomplete during the years when the capacity for savouring life is at its highest.

THE PERIL OF TOO MUCH HABIT.

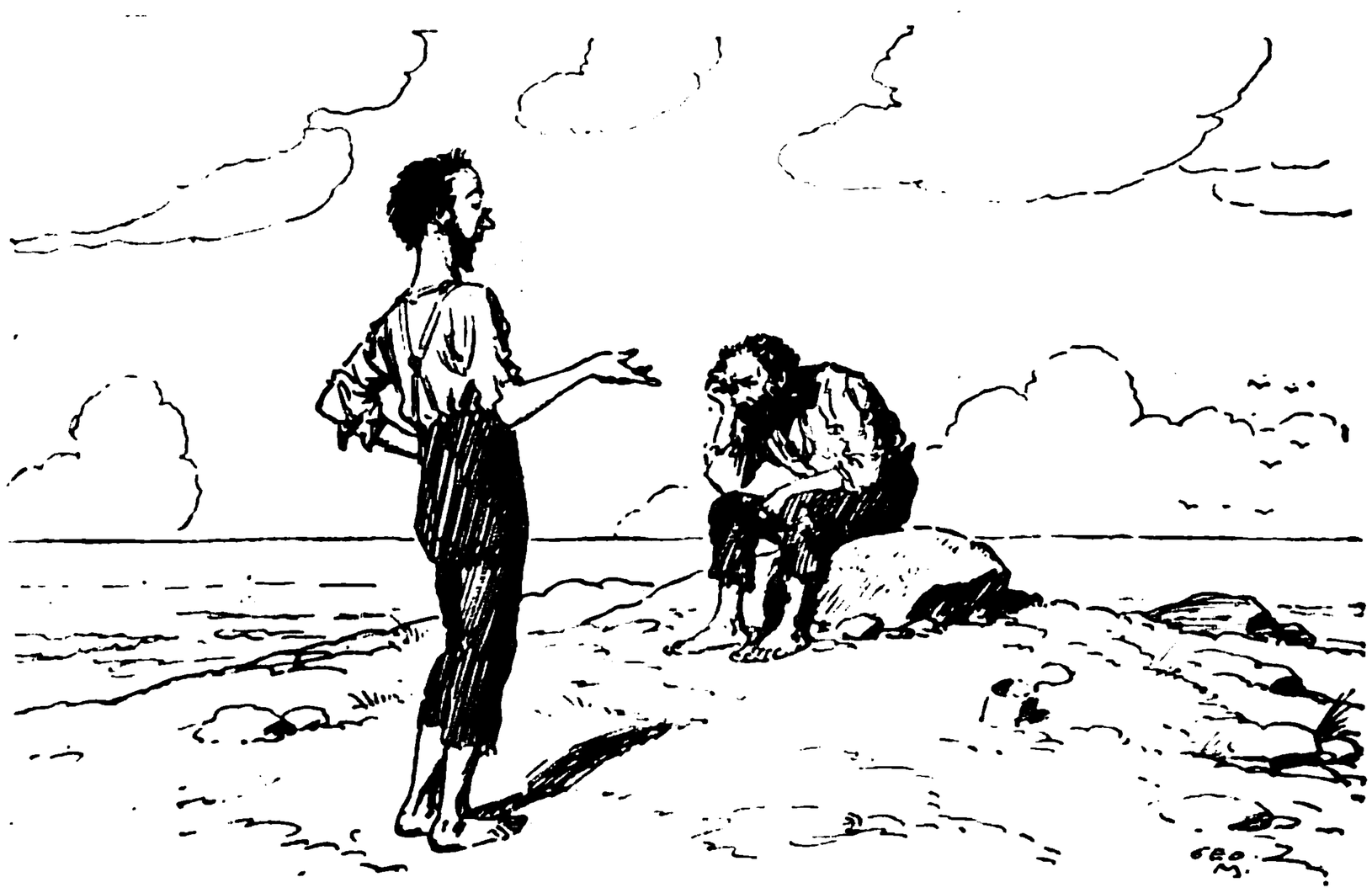
The over-cautious will certainly exclaim here :—

'But this is dangerous advice you are giving!"

It is. All advice, however, is dangerous, both to the giver and to the taker. And to be alive at all is a highly dangerous experience. Those who really wish to avoid all perils should arrange to expire, and even then——! This applies to the ambitious and to the unambitious equally. I sadly admit that it is quite possible, in the strife for perfection, to check good habits too severely and so fall into the other extreme of bad habits. But in my view the risk is worth running. I am not at all sure whether the worst of all sinners is not the self-righteous, self-opiniated, self-complacent prig. If I had to choose between passing the rest of my existence alone on a desert island with this gentleman and passing the rest of my existence alone on a desert island with an incompetent and negligent, broad-minded failure, I should undoubtedly vote for the latter. There is something to be said for failures—they are usually broad-minded. Whereas an excessive indulgence in good habits is bound to develop priggishness.

The truth—and when I use this huge word "truth" I, of course, mean only one facet of the truth—the truth is that life ought to be a feat of balancing, guided by a sense of proportion. To employ a simile: The right path lies, sometimes straight, sometimes curving, along a ridge from which the ground slopes downward on either side, now gradually, now steeply. Any simpleton can see and keep the path when the slope from it is steep and terrifying; it is the gradual slope which is to be feared, even by the wariest. And the gradual slope always gets steeper as it proceeds, so that after a certain point of declension has been reached it cannot be re-climbed, or it can only be re-climbed by the most transcendent effort of will and energy and persistence, an effort of which the majority would be incapable. As similes lose their value if carried too far, I will here drop this particular simile.

The balancing aforementioned is accomplished by means of habits, chiefly mental habits, of which physical habits are merely the creation. Beware of absolutely fixed habits. They are nearly always the sign that the sense of proportion has gone or is going, and that one part of the mental organism is flourishing at the expense of another. Fixed habits become ruthless; in the end they will demand terrific sacrifices from their rivals in the organism. You may read in the paper such an item as the following: "Mr. Joshua Crath died yesterday at the age of eighty-eight. He was to the end a prominent member of the choir of Winchester Cathedral, and it was his boast that he had not missed a single service for sixty-nine years."



Alone on a desert island with this gentleman!

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The record is appalling. Not to miss services is laudable on the part of a chorister, but not to miss a service for sixty-nine years is a crime against the humanity in oneself. It is plain that after Mr. Joshua Crath had done, say, twenty-five years without a break, his life must have been reduced to one sole object—not to miss services in Winchester Cathedral. The habit of not missing services in Winchester Cathedral must have come to occupy the throne of an autocrat in his organism. The conscience of Mr. Crath's organism was that habit, and it had no other conscience. Every social and family consideration was judged by one standard. Will attendance at the services in Winchester Cathedral be interfered with? If so, away with it!

This is an extreme example, but examples of the same species are to be found in all of us. When a wife says (not without wifely pride) of her husband: "John always works at so-and-so, or plays at so-and-so, at such and such a time. Nothing will induce him to miss it," then the husband should look out for himself. The chances are a thousand to one that he is off the high ridge. His sense of proportion is waning. An implacable tyrant is ascending the throne, and what ought to be a republic is being transformed into an absolute monarchy.

When a habit gets fixed, break it at any cost, and see what happens. The mere breaking is good in itself, being a proof of self-control; but the object of breaking is to find out what the habit has been doing for one, how far it has been interfering with the well-being of other faculties, and also incidentally with the well-being of other people. What has been deemed to be a good habit, a habit conducive to the fullest exploitation of the organism, may well turn out to be a bad habit producing more harm than good. The all-round effect of habits—not the obviously beneficial only—must positively be tested, and it can only be tested by temporarily breaking the habits and examining the total results of so doing.

Few, if any, habits have an exclusively beneficial influence on the organism as a whole. The affair of living to the best advantage is extremely complicated. We know little of the physical part of the organism. We know far, far less of the mental part of the organism, though important discoveries about it have recently been made. A man at the end of his life has scarcely begun to know himself. And yet the right way of treating the organism has to be found by the young: if it is not found early, and kept, the great job is muddled past recovery. A hard task for the young, especially as Providence in its wisdom has deprived the young of the faculty of learning from the old! The young can only succeed by remembering that, in a sense much deeper than is generally realized, man is a creature of habit.



Fixed habits become ruthless.

Next month: "Establishing Good Humour."

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THE SINISTER QUEST OF NORMAN GREYES

by

E·PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

No. 6.—THE WINDS OF DEATH.

By NORMAN GREYES.

I KNOW nothing of psychology, or any of the mental or nervous phenomena connected with the study of this abstruse subject. What happened to me during the autumn following my visit to Paris remains in my mind unexplained and inexplicable. I shall just set it down because it becomes a part of the story.

A strong man, in the possession of vigorous health, living an out-of-door life in a quiet country neighbourhood, I suddenly became afraid. I had the strongest conviction that some terrible disaster was hanging over me. Every morning, when I took up my gun for a tramp or stepped into my car for any sort of an excursion, I felt a chill presentiment of evil. It was not that I lost my nerve. I was still shooting and playing golf as well as or better than ever. I drove my car and went about the daily pursuits of life with an even pulse. My fears were unanalysable, and it really seemed as though they reached me through the brain rather than the nerves. I felt evil around me, and I looked always for an enemy. I woke often in the night and I listened for footsteps, unafraid yet expecting danger. I altered my will and sent it to the lawyer's. Several matters connected with the letting of my farms I cleared up almost hastily with my agent. I was conscious of only one enemy in the world, and it was practically impossible that he should be in England. Yet I expected death.

I was living at the time at Greyes Manor, the small but very pleasant country house which had come to me with my inheritance. My establishment was moderate, even for a bachelor. There was my housekeeper, Mrs. Foulds, who had been in the service of my uncle, an elderly lady of sixty-four, who had lived at Greyes all her life, was related to half the farmers in the neighbourhood, and was a pleasant, high-principled, and altogether estimable person. Adams, her nephew, was my butler and personal servant. There was a boy under him, also of the district; a cook and three maid-servants whom I seldom saw. The only other member of my household was Miss Simpson, a secretary engaged for me through a well-known office in London, to whom I dictated, for several hours a day, material for the work on Crime which I had made up my mind to write directly I had relinquished my post at Scotland Yard. She was a woman of about fifty years of age, small, with grey hair parted neatly in the middle, the only sister of a clergyman in Cambridgeshire, an agreeable and unobtrusive person, whom I invited to dine downstairs once a week, but whom I otherwise never saw except when engaged upon our work, or in the distance, taking her daily bicycle ride in the park or the lanes around. Out of doors there was Benjamin Adams, my gamekeeper, the brother of my butler; and Wilson, my chauffeur, who came to me from a place in Devonshire with excellent references, a simple-minded and almost over-ingenuous youth. These comprised the little coterie of persons with whom I was brought into contact day by day. Not one of them could possibly have borne me any ill-will; yet I lived amongst them, waiting for death.

One morning—I remember that it was the 1st of November—I set out for a long tramp, accompanied only by Adams, the keeper, and a couple of dogs. We were on the boundary of my land, looking for stray pheasants in a large root field. On my right

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was a precipitous gorge which extended for about half a mile, thickly planted with small fir trees. I was walking, by arrangement, about twenty yards ahead of Adams, when I was suddenly conscious of a familiar sensation. There was the zip of a bullet singing through the air, a report from somewhere in the gorge, a neat round hole through my felt hat.

"Gawd A'mighty!" yelled Adams, leaping into the air. "What be doing?"

I showed him my hat. He stood with his mouth open, looking at it. There was no further sound from the gorge except the tumbling of the stream down at the bottom. It was an absolutely hopeless place to search.

"We'll be getting home, Adams," I said.

"There be some rascal about, for sure," the man gasped, gazing fearfully towards the gorge.

"As he can see us," I pointed out, "and we certainly shall never be able to see him, I think we'll make for the road."

ADAMS complained sometimes of his rheumatism when I walked him too fast, but on this occasion he was a hundred yards ahead of me when we reached the lane. On our homeward way he was voluble.

"There be James Adams, my nephew," he said, "and William Crocombe, who do farm them lands. They be harmless folk, if ever such were. Some lad, I reckon, have got hold of the rook-scaring rifle."

"Do either of them take in tourists?" I asked.

Adams was doubtful. That afternoon I motored over to make inquiries. Neither of the farmers accepted tourists, neither of them had seen a stranger about the place, and as regards rifles, the only one I could discover had obviously not been discharged for a year. I drove on to the County Police-Station and left a message for the inspector. He came over to see me that evening, solemn, ponderous, and unimpressed.

"I suspect some farmer's lad were out after rabbits, sir," was his decision.

I showed him my hat.

"Farmers' lads," I pointed out, "don't, as a rule, shoot rabbits with a rifle which carries a bullet that size."

He scratched his head. The matter was certainly puzzling, but apparently without absorbing interest to him.

"Them lads be powerful mischievous," he remarked, wagging his head.

I dismissed him after the usual refreshments had been proffered and accepted. A few further inquiries which I myself made in the neighbourhood led to nothing. I took my little two-seater out to call on a friend a few afternoons afterwards, and found the steering-gear come to pieces before I had gone a mile. I was thrown into a ditch, but escaped without serious injury. I scarcely needed Wilson's assurance to convince me that he knew nothing of the matter, but even in its damaged state it was quite obvious that the pins had been wilfully withdrawn from the pillar. The fact that I was a prisoner in the house for several days from an injury to my knee, and worked at unaccustomed hours, was responsible for my accidental discovery of Miss Simpson's diary. I came into the room unexpectedly, and found her writing. It never occurred to me but that she was engaged upon my work, so I looked over her shoulder. She was writing in a diary, completing her entry for the day before:—

N. G. worked for two hours, practised golf in park, lunched in, took out two-seater in afternoon. Met with accident but was able to walk home. Said little about his injuries, which were not serious. Accepted invitation shoot Woolhanger Manor next Tuesday at eleven o'clock. Probably return across moor at dusk.

Miss Simpson was suddenly conscious of my presence. She placed her hand over the page.

"This is my private diary, Sir Norman," she asserted.

"So I gathered," I replied. "What is your interest in my doings, Miss Simpson?"

"A personal one," she assured me. "I appeal to you as a gentleman to let me have the volume."

I confess that I was weak. An altercation of any sort, however, ending, without doubt, in a struggle for the possession of the diary with this quiet-looking, elderly lady was peculiarly repugnant to me. I rang the bell.

"I shall order the car to take you to Barnstaple for the five o'clock train, Miss Simpson," I said.

She rose to her feet, grasping the book firmly.

"What is your complaint against me, Sir Norman?" she asked.

"During this last week," I told her, "two attempts have been made upon my life. I am naturally suspicious of people who keep a close account of my personal movements."

She stood for a moment looking at me through her gold-rimmed spectacles in a dazed, incredulous sort of way. Then she turned and left the room. I never saw her again.

That same afternoon, on my return from the village, where I had gone to post a letter with my own hands, I found a grey limousine touring car, covered with mud, outside my front door, and Adams announced that a

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gentleman was waiting to see me in the study. To my surprise and infinite satisfaction, it was Rimmington.

"I have this moment posted a letter to you," I said, as we shook hands.

"Anything doing down here?" he asked, quickly.

"Too much for my liking," I answered. "What will you have—tea, or a whisky-and-soda?"

He accepted the tea, and ate buttered toast in large quantities.

"I have come straight through from Basingstoke," he explained. "The Chief rather got the wind up about you."

"Tell me all about it," I begged.

"I wish I could," Rimmington replied, as he accepted a cigar and lit it. "You read the papers, I suppose?"

"Regularly."

"You've seen what a terrible time they've been having round New York? Eleven undiscovered murders in ten days, and several million dollars stolen. The New York police have been working steadily for some time, and made their *coup* last week. They made half-a-dozen arrests, but the head of the gang escaped."

"A known person?" I asked.

"Personally," was the confident reply, "I don't think there is the slightest doubt but that he is the man who has passed at different times as Thomas Pugsley, James Stanfield, and originally Michael Sayers. He has vanished from the face of the earth, so far as the New York police have ascertained, but they obtained possession of an uncompleted letter which he must have been typing at the time of the raid. The first page he probably destroyed or took with him. The second page refers to you. Here is a copy."

RIMMINGTON withdrew from his pocket-book a half-sheet of paper and passed it to me. I read it slowly, word for word:—

Things here have come to their natural end. The last fortnight has been productive, but there is danger in any further prosecution of our energies. There is only one man who stands in the way of my return to London. You know well of whom I speak. I wait day by day for your news of him, and hope to hear of no more blunders. See that the woman you know of, too, is carefully watched. She may be as loyal as she seems, but there are moments when I have had my doubts. If N. G. can be disposed of——

"Interesting," I remarked, "very! To whom was the letter addressed?"

"To a firm of leather brokers in Bermondsey," Rimmington replied, "and it was written on the notepaper of a firm of hide brokers in New York."

"The letter is from our friend, right enough," I decided. "There have been two attempts upon my life within the last two days, and I have just sent away a secretary who was keeping a careful note of my doings."

We talked for an hour or more, and arrived without difficulty at a common understanding. Rimmington undertook to send a good man down from Scotland Yard to make inquiries in the neighbourhood, and he promised also to trace my late secretary's antecedents through the office from which she had come. In the meantime, he begged me to return to London with him. The suggestion was not at first altogether attractive to me.

"I don't like being driven away from my own home," I grumbled. "Besides, there will be nothing for me to do in London at this time of the year."

"Greyes," he said, earnestly, "listen to me. You can play golf round London, and get on with your book. You are far safer there than you would be in an unprotected neighbourhood like this. But apart from that altogether, we want you up there. This wave of crime in New York has ceased. Paris, too, is quieter. The Chief is profoundly impressed with the belief that it is because operations are being transferred to London. That odd sheet of letter which I have shown you confirms the idea. I am perfectly convinced in my own mind that we are going to be up against it hard within the next few weeks."

"When do you want me to come?" I asked.

"Back with me to-night," he answered, promptly. "There is a full moon to-night, and my chauffeur knows every inch of the road. We can leave after dinner and breakfast in London."

"Very well," I agreed. "I will order an early dinner, and we can start directly afterwards."

I had told Rimmington of all the material things which had happened to me down at Greyes Manor, but I had not spoken of that curious sense of impending evil which had clouded my days and the prescience of which had been so remarkably verified. We were scarcely crossing the first stretch of Exmoor, however, when the memory of it came back to me, and with the memory an overpowering return of the feeling itself. I filled a pipe, stretched myself out in a corner of the car, and set myself to fight this grim ogre of fear. It was no easy matter, however. All through the night I was haunted with fancies. The gorse bushes on the moors seemed like crouching men, the whistle from

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a distant railway station a warning of impending danger. In a small town-village before we arrived at Taunton a man stood in the open doorway of his house, looking out at the night. He scanned us as we passed, and turned away. Through the uncurtained window of his sitting-room I saw a telephone on his table. At Wiveliscombe a man with a motor-bicycle stood silent as we passed. He leaned forward as though to see the number of our car. In ten minutes he raced past us, his powerful engine making the night hideous with its unsilenced explosions. Across Salisbury Plain, as we drew near Stonehenge, a cruelly cold wind was blowing. We drank from a flask which I had brought, and wrapped ourselves up a little closer. At some cross-roads, high up in the bleakest part, another car was waiting, its lights out, its appearance sinister. We passed it, however, at fifty miles an hour, and the man who was its solitary occupant scarcely looked up at us. We passed through Amesbury, up the long rise to Andover, through Basingstoke, and settled down into a steady fifty miles an hour along wonderful roads. The moon was paling now, and there were signs of dawn; right ahead of us was a thin streak of silver in the clouds, slowly changing to a dull purple. Before we had realized it, we were in the outskirts of London, our pace gradually reduced, but still racing through the sombre twilight. At Isleworth, just as we had passed under the railway arch, I felt the brakes suddenly applied, and thrust my head out of the window. We had come almost to a standstill, stopped by a stalwart policeman who, notebook in hand, had been talking to the occupant of a touring car drawn up by the side of the road. He came up to the open window.

"Are you gentlemen going through to London?" he inquired.

"We are," I told him. "What can we do for you?"

The words had scarcely left my lips when I knew that we were in a trap. I realized it just in time to save my life. I struck with all my force at the ugly little black revolver which was thrust almost into my face. There was a report, a sharp pain at the top of my shoulder, and the revolver itself slipped from the man's crushed fingers. I was within an ace of having him by the throat, but he just eluded me. The touring car was now passing us slowly, and he leapt into it, leaving his helmet lying in the road. A third man, who seemed to rise up from underneath our car, tore along and jumped in behind, and they shot forward, travelling at a most astonishing pace. Rimmington shouted to our chauffeur down the tube, with the idea of pursuing them. We started forward with a series of horrible bumps, and came almost immediately to a standstill. I sprang out. Both our back tyres had been stabbed through with some sharp instrument. In the distance, the other car had rounded the corner and, with screaming siren, was racing away for London.

By JANET.

IT was towards the middle of October when I heard from my husband for the first time for many months. For a long time my luck had been atrocious. I lost the greater part of the money paid me for the recovery of Mrs. Trumperton-Smith's diamonds, by an investment in a small millinery business which I discovered too late to be already moribund. I had lost post after post for the same maddening reason. My looks had suffered through privation, and my shabby clothes were unbecoming enough, but if I had been Helen of Troy herself I could scarcely have evoked more proposals of the sort which must bring to an end ordinary relations between employer and *employée*. My good resolutions began to weaken. I had almost made up my mind to appeal for help in quarters which would necessarily have meant the end of my more or less honest life, when one morning a young man who looked like a bank-clerk was ushered shamelessly by my landlady into my bed-sitting-room. I was folding up a coat which I was going to take to the pawnbroker. I was not in a very pleasant frame of mind, and I was furious with my landlady.

"What do you want?" I asked, coldly. "This is not a room in which I can receive visitors."

"My visit is one of business, madam," he answered. "Are you Mrs. Janet Stanfield?"

"I am generally known by that name," I replied.

He opened his pocket-book and counted out two hundred pounds in bank-notes upon the table. After my first exclamation, I watched him, spellbound.

"With the compliments of the bank manager," he said, as he took up his hat and turned away.

"Who sent the notes?" I called out after him. "What bank is it from?"

"The bank of faith, hope, and charity," he answered, with a smile. "Good morning!"

He was gone before I could get out another word. I took up the notes greedily. I had done my best to live without my husband's help ever since certain news as to his doings in America had reached me. For some reason which I did not myself altogether understand, I had, I thought, cut myself off from any association with him and his friends. Yet, in my present straits, my attempt at

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I was within an ace of having him by the throat, but he just eluded me.

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independence seemed hopeless. The money was a necessity to me.

I paid my landlady, and made her a present of my dilapidated wardrobe. I possessed the art of knowing how and where to buy things, and before lunch-time that day I was installed in a small flat in a residential suite situated in Albemarle Street, wearing clothes which were in keeping with my surroundings, and with an evening dress and cloak in reserve My neck and throat and fingers were bare, for I had seen nothing of my jewellery since our ill-omened adventure in Paris. At five minutes to one, however, even this condition was amended. A youth from the hall-porter's office put a package into my hand which had just been left by a messenger. I opened it and found half-a-dozen familiar morocco cases. A portion of the jewellery which I had never thought to see again was in my hands. It was now clear to me that my husband had either already returned or was on the point of doing so, and that my help was needed. Nevertheless, three days went by without a sign or message from anybody—three days during which I lived after the fashion of a cat, curled up in warmth and luxury, clinging to the feel of my clothes, revelling in the perfumes of my bath, eating good food and drinking wine with slow but careful appreciation. I felt the life revive in me, the blood flow once more through my veins. During those three days, nothing in this world would have driven me back to my poverty. I would have committed almost any crime rather than return to it.

ON the fourth day I met Norman Greyes. I was leaving a hairdressser's shop in Curzon Street, when he swung round the corner of Clarges Street, carrying a bag of golf-clubs, and evidently looking for a taxicab. I was within a foot or two of him before he recognized me. I was conscious of a keen and peculiar thrill of pleasure as I saw something flash into his stern, unimpressive face. Enemies though we were, he was glad to see me.

"Good morning, Sir Norman," I said, holding out my hand. "Are there no more criminals left in the world that you take holiday?"

He smiled, and put his clubs through the open window of a taxicab which had just drawn up by the side of the kerb.

"I am tired of hunting criminals," he confessed. "Besides, they are turning the tables. They are hunting me."

"Indeed?" I answered. "That sounds as though my husband were coming back."

"There are rumours of it," he admitted. "Are you staying near here?"

"I am living at the Albemarle Court," I told him. "Why not have me watched? If he does come back, I am sure I am one of the first people he would want to visit."

"It is a wonderful idea," he agreed, with a peculiar gleam in his keen grey eyes. "I would rather bribe you, though, to give him up."

"How much?" I asked. "He has treated me very badly lately."

"Dine with me to-night," he suggested, "and we will discuss it."

I am convinced that Norman Greyes is my enemy, as he is Michael's, and that I hate him. Nevertheless, he has a power over me to which I shall never yield, but which I cannot explain or analyse. At the thought of dining alone with him I felt a little shiver run through my body. He stood looking down at me, smiling as he waited for my answer.

"I shall be charmed," I assented, boldly.

"At my rooms," he suggested; "number thirteen. About eight o'clock?"

"Why not at a restaurant?" I asked.

"Out of consideration for you," he replied, promptly. "You are probably more or less watched and your movements reported to the organization of which your husband is the chief. If you are seen dining alone with me in a public place, they may imagine that you have come over to the enemy."

"You are most thoughtful," I replied, with all the sarcasm in my tone which I could command. "I will come to your rooms, then."

He nodded quite pleasantly, raised his cap, and stepped into the taxicab. I watched him for a moment, hating him because he seemed to be the one person who had the power to ruffle me. He was dressed just as I like to see men dressed, in grey tweed, loose but well-fitting. He wore a soft collar, and the tie of a famous cricket club. His tweed cap was set just at the right angle. He moved with the light ease of an athlete. I hated his shrewd, kindly smile, the clearness of his bronzed complexion, the little humorous lines about his eyes. I went straight back to my rooms and wrote him a few impulsive lines. I wrote to say that I would dine with him at any restaurant he liked, but not in Clarges Street, and that he could call for me at eight o'clock.

At half-past three that afternoon I received the invitation which I had been expecting, and at four o'clock I stepped out of a taxicab and entered the offices of a firm of solicitors situated in a quiet square near Lincoln's Inn. An office-boy rose up from behind a worm-eaten desk and invited me to seat myself on a hard wooden chair whilst he disappeared in search of Mr. Younghusband, the principal partner in the firm. The office was decorated by rows of musty files and a line of bills containing particulars

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of property sales, the solicitors in each case being the firm of Younghusband, Nicholson, and Younghusband. After a few minutes' delay, the boy summoned me and held open a door on the other side of the passage.

"Mr. Younghusband will see you, madam," he announced.

THE door was closed behind me, and I shook hands with a tall, elderly man who rose to welcome me in somewhat abstracted fashion. He was untidily but professionally dressed. He wore old-fashioned, steel-rimmed spectacles, reposing at the present moment on his forehead. The shape of his collar and the fashion of his tie belonged to a bygone generation. There were rows of tin boxes extending to the ceiling, a library of law-books, and his table was littered with papers. He reseated himself as soon as I had accepted his proffered chair, pushed a thick parchment deed on one side, crossed his legs, and looked at me steadily.

"Mrs.—er—Morrison?" he began, using the name by which I had been known during the last few months.

"That is more or less my name," I admitted. "I received a telephone message asking me to call this afternoon."

"Quite so, quite so," he murmured, a little vaguely. "Now let me see," he went on, looking amongst some papers. "Your husband appears to have been a client of the firm for many years, but my memory—oh, here we are," he broke off, drawing a slip of paper towards him. "My instructions, cabled from New York, were to hand you the sum of two hundred pounds. You received that amount, I believe?"

"I received it, and have spent the greater part of it," I replied.

His expression became a little less benign.

"Dear me, dear me!" he exclaimed. "That sounds rather extravagant."

"I have been without any means of support for many months," I told him.

He scratched his upper lip thoughtfully.

"Your husband has, I gather, been engaged in operations in New York of a delicate nature. The world of finance has always its secrecies. He appears now, however, to have brought his operations to a close. You are aware, perhaps, that he has landed in England?"

My heart gave a little jump. I could not tell whether the sensation I experienced had more in it of joy or of fear.

"Is he safe?" I asked.

"Safe?" Mr. Younghusband repeated, a little vaguely. "Why not?"

There was a moment's silence. I looked around at the shabby but imposing contents of the office, at the lawyer's mildly puzzled expression. I drank in the whole atmosphere of the place, and I was dumb. Mr. Younghusband suddenly smiled, and tapped with his forefinger upon the table. He was like a man who has suddenly seen through a faulty phrase in some legal document.

"I apprehend you," he said. "For a moment I was not altogether able to appreciate the significance of your question. New York is a curious place, and I understand—er—that the financial operations in which your husband has been concerned, although profitable, may have made him enemies. He travelled back to England, indeed, under an assumed name. Let me see, I have it somewhere," he went on, fumbling once more amongst a mass of papers. "I had it in my hand only a few minutes ago. Here we are—Mr. Richard Peters. I am instructed to say, madam, that your husband would welcome a call from you."

"You have his address?"

For the moment Mr. Younghusband looked vague again. Then, with a little smile of triumph, he turned over the slip of paper which he held in his hand.

"His address," he repeated. 'Precisely! I have it here — No. 11, Jackson Street."

"Mayfair?" I inquired.

"Mayfair," he assented. "The address reminds me, madam," he went on, "that you must be prepared to see your husband—er—not in the best of health. He is, in fact, in a nursing home."

"Is he seriously ill?" I asked.

"I believe not," was the deliberate reply. "You will have an opportunity of judging for yourself within half an hour. I am to ask you to visit him as soon as you can find it convenient."

I sat quite still. I was trying to get these matters into my mind. The lawyer glanced at his watch and immediately struck the bell in front of him.

"You will forgive me, madam," he said, rising to his feet. "I have a meeting of the Law Society to attend. My compliments to your husband. Tell him to let me know if I can be of further service to him."

The boy was holding open the door. Mr. Younghusband, with a courteous, old-fashioned bow, evidently considered the interview at an end. I went back to my taxicab, a little bewildered, and drove at once to Jackson Street. A nurse in starched linen frock and flowing cap consulted a little slate, and led me to a bedroom in one of the upper storeys.

"Mr. Peters is getting on famously, madam," she announced, encouragingly. "The doctor hopes to be able to let him out at the end of the week. Please step in. You can stay as long as you like. . . . Your wife is

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here, Mr. Peters," she went on, ushering me through the doorway.

She closed the door, and I advanced towards the bedside, only to step back with a little exclamation. I thought that there must be some mistake. The man who sat up in bed, watching me, seemed at first sight a stranger. His hair, which had been dark, was now of a sandy grey, and he wore a short, stubbly moustache of the same colour. His cheeks had fallen in, his forehead seemed more prominent, there was an unfamiliar scar on the left side of his face.

"Michael!" I exclaimed, incredulously.

"Capital!" he replied. "You see no resemblance to Mr. James Stanfield?"

"Not the slightest," I assured him. "The whole thing is wonderful. But what is the matter with you?"

"Nothing," was the impatient rejoinder. "I have had to starve myself to get thin. I took the place and the name of a business acquaintance upon the boat. It was quite a smart piece of work. I am supposed to be suffering from a nervous breakdown. Bosh! I haven't a nerve in my body."

"You left me alone for a long time," I reminded him.

"I was fighting for my life," he answered, grimly. "You don't know the inner workings of the game, so I can't explain. I was hemmed in. As soon as I broke away, they were never on to me again. I brought off the *coup* of my life in New York, but—things went wrong, Janet. You know what that means."

I watched his face whilst I listened to him speak. The man was re-establishing his strange ascendancy over me, but for the first time I felt the thrill of fear as he spoke.

"You killed someone?" I whispered.

"I had no intention of doing anything of the sort," he answered. "It was Hartley, the banker, himself. He forced me into a fight at close quarters. We exchanged shots. I was wounded. So was he. He was in miserable health, though, and he never recovered. The shock killed him as much as anything. I got away all right, but it means all or nothing for the future."

"If you have enough," I suggested, "why not try the other end of the world?"

His thin lips curled scornfully.

"I have thought of everywhere," he answered; "of Indo-China, the South Sea Islands, New Guinea, the far South American States. They are all hopeless."

"What about our meeting?" I asked. "I am known."

"It is a problem to be solved," he said, slowly. "There is risk in it; yet the thought of parting with you, Janet, is like a clutching hand laid upon my heart."

It was the first word of the sort he had ever spoken to me, and again for some reason I shivered.

"What is your need of me now?" I demanded.

"To get rid of Norman Greyes," he replied.

THERE was a silence during which I felt that he was studying my face, and although I do not believe that a muscle twitched or that my eyes lost their steady light, still I was thankful for the darkened room. We heard the subdued noises of the house, the distant hum of vehicles, every now and then the sharp honk of a motor-horn. In the tops of the trees just outside some birds were twittering.

"I have figured it all out," he went on. "I am safe here—safe except from that one man. Even as I am now, he would recognize me. The moment I move—and there are big things to be done here—I shall feel him on my trail. It is his life or mine."

"Why do you think that I can do this?" I asked.

His lips curled once more in the faintest of mirthless smiles.

"Because, although he does not know it, Norman Greyes feels your attraction. He is too strong a man to succumb, but he can never resist dallying with it, because it provides him with something new in life. You suggest to him a sensation which he obtains nowhere else. I know men like books, Janet, and I have seen these things."

"Do you know women, too?" I ventured.

"Sufficiently," he answered.

"How do you propose that I should do this?" I asked.

He raised himself a little in the bed.

"Norman Greyes," he said, "is one of those men whom it is hard to kill. A fool walks to his death. Norman Greyes wears the aura of defiance. They have tried during the last few weeks. One of the finest marksmen in England missed him with a rifle at a hundred yards. He is a reckless motorist, yet he drove a car with safety when the steering-wheel collapsed. Nevertheless, if he had stayed in Devonshire we should have had him. They tell me that he is in London."

"He is within a few yards of this spot," I announced, "and I am dining with him to-night."

For a moment his eyes flashed at me like steel caught in the sunlight.

"I met him at the corner of the street this morning," I explained.

"I ask no questions," was the cold reply. "I shall know if you are ever faithless. A little present for you, Janet."

He brought his hand from under the pillow and handed me an exquisitely-chased gold box, a curio of strange shape and with small enamel figures inlaid. I exclaimed with

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delight. He touched the spring. It was filled with white powder, on the top of which reposed a tiny powder-puff.

"Be careful not to let any of the powder get near your mouth," he enjoined. "A pinch upon the food or in the glass is sufficient. Take it."

"Michael," I exclaimed, "what is the matter with you?"

"Nothing. I am supposed **to be suffering from a nervous breakdown. Bosh! I haven't a nerve in my body.**"

I dropped it into the silk bag I was carrying. I was trying to tell myself that I had killed a man before.

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"That half-ounce cost me one hundred pounds," he said. "Men scour the world for it. You can handle the powder freely. There is no danger until it gets into the system."

"And then?"

"It makes a helpless invalid of the strongest for at least two years."

By NORMAN GREYES.

I HAVE come to the conclusion that in future I shall do well to avoid Janet Stanfield. As the cold, mechanical assistant of a master of crime, she interested me. I have even devoted a chapter of my forthcoming book to an analysis of her character. I am beginning to realize now, however, that even the hardest and cruellest woman cannot escape from the tendencies of her sex. In all the duels I have previously had with her she has carried herself with cold and decorous assurance. There has never been a moment when I have seen the light of any real feeling in her eyes. Last night, however, a different woman dined with me. She was more beautiful than I had ever imagined her, by reason of the slight flush that came and went in her cheeks. Her eyes seemed to have increased in size and to flash with a softer brilliance. We sat at a corner table against the wall at Soto's, where the room was, as usual, filled with beautiful women. There was no one who attracted so much attention as my companion. There was no one who deserved it.

"You think I am looking well?" she asked, in reply to some observation of mine.

"Wonderfully," I replied. "Also, if I may be allowed to comment upon it, changed. You look as though you had found some new interest in life."



Janet was certainly in a strange and nervous state. She suddenly turned back

She laughed, a little bitterly.

"Where should I seek it?" she demanded.

"Perhaps the change is internal," I suggested. "Perhaps your outlook upon life is changing. Perhaps you have made up your mind to put away the false gods."

"I have travelled too far along one road," she answered, hardly.

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It was at this stage in our conversation that I made up my mind that it were better for me to see this woman no more. Our eyes met, and she suddenly was not hard at all. I seemed to look into her soul, and there were things there which I could not understand. I was thankful that the dancing began just then. It helped us over a curious gulf of silence. Janet danced with little knowledge of the steps but with a wonderful sense of rhythm. I was ashamed of the pleasure it gave me to realize, as we moved away to the music, that this woman of steel had a very soft and human body.

Janet was certainly in a strange and nervous state that evening. We danced for some time without resting. Then she suddenly turned back to the table. I had paused for a moment to speak to some acquaintances. When I rejoined her she was pale, and the hand which was holding her little gold powder-box was shaking.

"Has anything happened?" I asked her, a little concerned. "Are you not feeling well? Perhaps the dancing——"

"I loved it," she interrupted. "I am quite well."

Yet she sat there tense and speechless. I made up my mind to finish my coffee and go. I had raised the cup to my lips, even, when she suddenly swayed across the table, knocking my arm with her elbow. My coffee was spilt and the tablecloth was ruined. Janet began to laugh. For a moment she seemed to have a fit of breathlessness. Then, as she watched the cloth being changed, she became herself again. She had the air of one who had met a crisis and conquered it.

"I am so sorry for my clumsiness," she said, penitently. "Let us dance again whilst they rearrange the table."

This time her feet moved less airily to the music. She seemed heavier in my arms.

"Who gave you that beautiful gold powder-box?" I inquired, more for the sake of making conversation than from any actual curiosity.

Something of the old light flashed for a moment in her eyes. Her reply struck me as curious.

"Satan," she acknowledged. "I have made up my mind, however, to send it back."



to the table. I had paused for a moment to speak to some acquaintances

(Another thrilling story in this series will appear next month.)

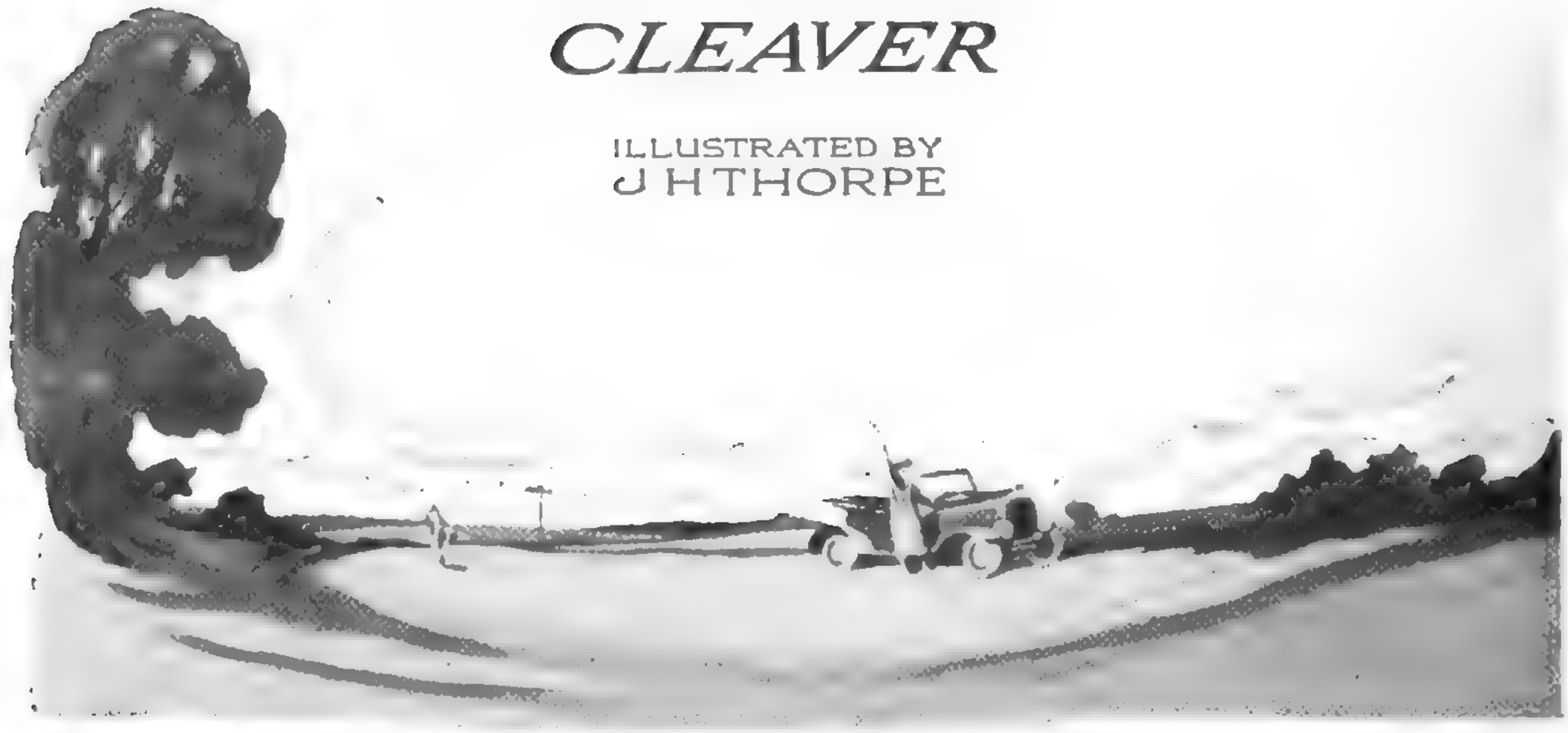
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BLIND MAN'S BUFF

by

HYLTON CLEAVER

ILLUSTRATED BY
J H THORPE



HUNCHED up in the corner of a taxi, Gerald Buchanan beheld the truth. He was the most inept love-maker in the world.

In his favour two things alone stood out. He came of a distinguished family, and he had won a Cambridge half-blue for running. Everything else was to his disadvantage. He had no brains. In the presence of ladies he became all hands and feet. And this was not the worst, for he wore glasses, without which he was very nearly blind.

Gerald was in love. Meet the lady—Millicent Farquhar—and know that this very night there had been a dance. Out on the balcony under a star-lit sky, with Millicent, the soft night air had made the moment seem propitious for him to state his case, and he clearly remembered lowering his head, with a view to doing so, devotedly towards the halo of her hair. Upon that instant she had bobbed her head unexpectedly upward, and those miserable pince-nez of his had gone in a flat spin over the marble balustrade, crashing upon the gravel path below, where they broke into a hundred pieces. No man living could have continued to make love after that. Besides, the very same thing had happened more than once before. Millicent, indeed, was *always* knocking off his glasses.

Nevertheless, she had scolded him all the time he was blundering back with her down dim-lit passages. Once he had heard her say: "Surely you have a spare pair with you?" But he had been compelled to answer "No. I keep a pair in various places, here, there, and everywhere, so that, if need be, I can go to the nearest rallying point and get a refit, but I never carry any with me. A thing like a spectacle-case spoils the set of a fellow's jacket absolutely. I shall have to go to my club."

After all, when he had once suggested wearing horn-rimmed spectacles, which he could hook on to his ears and retain comfortably in place through all emergencies, it had been Millicent who had voted against them.

"If you must wear glasses," she had said, "for goodness' sake wear the most inconspicuous kind you can."

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Now he had lost her for the evening.

She had chosen to go on to a supper party where she thought she would be expected, and she had very palpably been annoyed. He could not quite see how he could help it, but he was suitably contrite until she had gone; and now, wedged in the corner of his own taxi, he realized the truth.

In this mood he called at his club, reappeared with new pince-nez defiantly set upon his nose, and stood for a moment gazing thoughtfully up the road until, at last, decision came to him. Then he turned to the man at the wheel with the gesture of one who is deliberately taking the downward path, and said: "Drive me to Pepper's."

For one who seeks real solace, Pepper's is clearly indicated.

TOWARDS dawn Gerald paid the fare of his hired car with an absent movement of the hand, and, with a farewell gesture, began to walk in a somewhat uncertain manner up the winding drive of the large house, outside which he had been deposited. At the front door he stopped, compared his key shrewdly with the keyhole, inserted it, and turned the lock. Next he was in the hall, and here, with the lights turned fully upon him, he stood blinking towards the staircase, upon which there stood a grey-haired little man wrapped up in great quantities of dressing-gown, who peered with hard eyes fixedly into the hall.

"You don't mean to say," this little man began, in a husky whisper of despair, "you can't pretend you've *forgotten the race?*"

For a little while Gerald could only stare, but all the time that he saw his father standing there, with one hand pitifully outstretched and widening eyes, he was regaining complete sobriety. For it was true. Merciful heavens! He *had* forgotten.

"I have been out of town for a fortnight," his father told him, "and I could scarcely believe my ears when they told me that you had gone out to-night. It seemed incredible. This race means everything to me. Whatever has made you forget it, Gerald, like this?"

His father was looking absolutely tragic.

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Gerald could not explain. He was in love, and that was all there was to it, but it was difficult to make this point convincing. He knew, too, just what it meant to his father. When he had been the veriest tot, scarcely able to crawl, this fanatical father of his, one-time Mile Amateur Champion of England, had backed him to win this race. Every year throughout his life he had been reminded that when he was twenty-one he was to run against Hastings's only son; and Hastings and his father were friends who, in their hostile moods, were Potash and Perlmutter over again. He and young Hastings had both reached the twenty-one year mark, as it were, during the war, and the race had accordingly had to wait, but it had all been fixed up now, long ago, and to-day they were to run. The course was three miles; they were to call it a private trial, and they were to run it at Fenner's.

At last he found speech.

"I'm most awfully sorry," he began. "Until this moment the thing had simply gone clean out of my head since you mentioned it last. Still," he added, hastily, "it'll be quite all right. I'm perfectly fit."

"Fit?" repeated his father, aghast. "Why, you're smoking now; and you've been drinking. It's nearly four o'clock in the morning!"

Gerald made a quick, deprecating movement. He would have given anything to have been able to explain, but he could find no reasonable words at all. The thing that he had done was indefensible. His father seemed to stand there for ages, supporting himself with one hand against the wall and one upon the banisters, and at last he said, dully: "Hastings will laugh right out in our faces. I can't believe you've done a thing like this. I was absolutely confident."

He turned and went slowly back up the stairs, shaking his head continuously from side to side, whilst Gerald stayed in the hall like a paralytic, gazing after him as he went and wishing with all his might that someone would make a dramatic entry from behind and kick him violently where he stood. Then he sat down and buried his head in his hands. He was the most unmitigated failure on the earth. He was the world's most perfect ass.

Yet it was not till the last lap of that great race came that he realized the grim reality of it to the full. His wind had all gone to pieces, and he could not last out the pace. He made two separate and distinct attempts to draw up alongside Hastings, but without avail, and so he finished wearily, beaten, and knowing exactly why.

That evening he went to his father and said: "I'm more sorry than I can say to have disappointed you like this. It was that night-out spoilt my chance. I clean forgot." He wanted to add: "You see, I'm in love, and I'd had a bit of a knock." But that was useless.

His father looked up at him solemnly and said: "You don't quite understand. The thing that's troubling me is the wager. When Hastings and I were young and we made that wager, we staked too high, each challenging the other's confidence—fifty—one hundred—make it two-fifty. We'd both been such runners, you see, and we each had insuperable belief in our own boys. We made it five hundred pounds—and now his son has beaten mine. Well, I can take defeat as well as any man, but to-day things are not quite as I thought they would be, and five hundred pounds means a lot to me. I thought we were so sure to win. Five hundred would have tided me over an anxious spell. Instead, I've to find five hundred, and I hadn't made any arrangements."

Gerald looked at him with slowly parting lips.

"Why, I'd no idea. You should have told me this before, dad."

"I thought there would be no need."

Gerald swallowed once, the better to clear his voice, and then he spoke up again.

"I must get down to work at once. I'd no idea. You must stop my allowance, of course."

His father stood up with a smile that seemed to live only on one side of his face. "Well, it's not quite so bad as that," said he. "It's just very unfortunate—very." He clapped Gerald manfully upon the back. Clearly he was going to forgive him. Further, it seemed for one moment that the situation would very likely become dramatic, and Gerald was at his very worst in any kind of drama. He lifted his hand a little anxiously towards his nose, and said:—

"Take care, dad. These glasses of mine are pretty expensive things, and, if anyone touches me unexpectedly, they sometimes explode."

ON the sunny side of Piccadilly a young man and a girl were causing obstruction by standing in conversation on the pavement. The young man was Gerald, and he was speaking.

"So I must go gently until things straighten out. I was under a misapprehension. We haven't the money I thought."

"The car that you spoke about won't be coming along, then?"

He shook his head regretfully; he wanted to say: "I wonder if you would wait," but something in Millicent's manner had taken the heart out of him quite unexpectedly.

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Nevertheless he kept looking hopefully towards the soft curve of her cheek, because if a dimple came into it suddenly he would know that she was smiling after all, but it seemed that the sign was never going to come. This was extraordinarily disappointing. It seemed, moreover, that she was about to go.

"I suppose," he blurted, rather desperately, "you wouldn't care to come into the Park on Sunday? We could sit in Rotten Row on a couple of those green chairs they let out—and talk."

He could not see her eyes without crouching low down and looking up under her hat, but he was suddenly aware that she was smiling at last; not, however, with him in his trouble, but at him for his egregious folly. She moved as if to pass him by, and he cupped his hands ready to catch his pince-nez if she should knock them off.

"As a matter of fact, I'm motoring up to Taplow with a man on Sunday. I don't know whether you know him—rather a famous runner, so p'r'aps you do. Hastings—his father has given him this new car for winning some trial a few days ago. He beat some rather important person. I don't know who it was."

Gerald had drawn back and was looking at her as if she were suddenly unreal, and now he pointed a finger stiffly towards himself, and said, quite hopelessly: "Why, good gracious, that was *me!*"

He was not quite sure whether she believed him or not. She looked at him quaintly, and then she waved one hand nonchalantly, said "Well, bye-bye," and was gone, whilst he still stood, his hands just where he had held them to catch his glasses, his lips a little apart, and just enough in his stricken attitude to suggest a man who has let some costly piece of china fall with a crash upon the pavement. This was the end. He had been paid in full.

TIME passed, and he seemed uncertain where to go or what to do, but he grew tired eventually of being bumped and bored by passers-by, and so he turned into Shaftesbury Avenue and began to walk up the street. For some little while he simply stretched one leg dismally before the other, his hands feebly clasped upon a stick behind his back, and every feeling that he had parched into nothing. Then, quite unwittingly, his eyes were held by the figure of a girl who had been coming towards him from Cambridge Circus. For a while he did not recognize in this girl any friendly feature; he just thought that her hat and her costume were rather refreshing to the eye, and that she was probably good at golf—this much and no more, until, that is to say, she suddenly turned from a shop window and, meeting him face to face, looked at him hard, and smiled, and held out her hand. Instantaneously he forgot all else. He just swung his stick under one arm, and took her gloved hand into both of his with a perfect yelp of intense relief. And so he stood looking at her ecstatically, and now and again he just said "Peggy!" whilst she began to laugh gently at his thankfulness.

In a far corner of the Trocadero tea-room they regarded one another across a table.

"Something's the matter, isn't it?" said Peggy at last. "You look as though life held no nuts. Tell me what it is."

To tell was the one thing Gerald wanted most of all to do. He wanted to get the whole agonizing business off his chest, and Peggy was just the girl to listen. Peggy used to live next door. Peggy and he had played stump cricket together for hours on end. He wanted to reach out and grip her by the hand again to make sure that she was there. She was such a jolly good sort. Peggy, indeed, had taken a spare pair of his glasses with her when she had moved because he had said it might be a good excuse to call upon her sometimes—but then the war had come.

Well, he told it all, and in conclusion he had only to add, with a touch of pathos: "You see, then, that everything I've touched seems to have come unstuck, and, as you observe me now, I'm simply sitting amidst the ruins of the might-have-been."

"Dear me!" said Peggy. "I wonder, now, what you had better do?"

"Pick up the pieces," suggested Gerald, hopefully.

"What I should want to do, if I were you, would be to win that five hundred back."

"A good plan, but how?"

"Couldn't you race again?—this man will be so confident. You could double the stakes."

Gerald suddenly stiffened into an upright position, and thumped a clenched hand upon the table.

"You've hit it," said he. "Now, I should never have thought of that all by myself. We *will* race again, and I'll make it his favourite distance. Then he'll be bound to agree. Last time we raced three miles, and I was supposed to be best at that. Now we'll go seven miles—cross-country—his speciality. He won't know how good I am, and Hastings—old Hastings—he'll do anything for a gamble. He'll put up a thousand like a lamb. One minute, though—a point. How are *we* going to find that pile of money? My dad can hardly scrape up five hundred as it is."

"Make certain to win," said Peggy,

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cheerfully. "There's no need to show the money, surely; and if you should lose—well, it's a debt of honour, and you'll find a way to pay it. Sell up—you and your father go broke together. I know your dad. A long shot always appealed to his fancy. Make the bet—then win. That's what I'd want to do if I were you."

Again Gerald thumped the table. Waiters came running to the spot. But Gerald was concentrated upon a new resolve. He waved them aside.

"I'll do it," said he. "That's a promise from me—to you. And if I win, why, the dad might be able to give *me* a car, eh? And then p'r'aps Millicent—this girl I'm telling you about—p'r'aps she'd come for a ride with *me* then?" He looked up like an intelligent child.

"I'm quite sure she would," said Peggy.

"YOU have learned your lesson, and I haven't lost my trust," said Gerald's father. "My son must surely be as good as a Hastings. We *will* stake; and if you should lose again"—he shut his teeth with a resonant snap—"then we'll go broke together, just as you say, father and son—there'll be no disgrace in that." He looked up pugnaciously, as if in challenge to all the world.

"He's running in the County Cross-Country Championship," said Gerald. "I've found that out, and so I shall enter too, and we'll stake the ancestral home on that."

THE comic doors of a white-façaded restaurant spun on their axis and deposited first Peggy, then an elderly gentleman, sideways upon the pavement, and here they stood for a moment regarding each other in the approving manner of those who have made a singularly tasteful supper. The latter was disposed to maintain the dignity of his mood by calling a taxi-cab, but in the very act of raising his hand majestically aloft he was restrained by a light touch upon the arm.

"Do let's walk—just to Charing Cross. I love London at night, and I like to show you off to people. Not very many girls go out with a judge, you know."

The elderly gentleman looked down and allowed his eyes to rest for a moment upon this, his very satisfactory daughter. The folds of Peggy's cloak outlined her compact shapeliness in very charming taste. Her light scarf lay shining like night frost upon the cluster of her hair, and, catching her as he did, half-profile, he was unusually struck by the fascination of her smile.

"We *will* walk," said he. "I am not at all sure that I don't rather like to show you off myself."

So that was how it happened.

A group of well-dressed young men, somewhat incongruous by reason of the various angles at which they wore their hats and the untidy way they carried opera cloaks, were standing at the corner of Piccadilly Circus, and if Peggy had driven home she would not have passed that way. But there, she was walking, and as her father steered her a little wide of these few young men she turned to look at them, for she had caught the sound of a familiar name. And thus she saw. In the centre of the group stood Gerald Buchanan, and they were patting him very effusively upon the back, whilst, as they patted him, his silk hat was toppling farther and farther over one eye; and he did nothing to prevent it. Indeed, he was smiling largely. That was all. From that unedifying moment a walk through the West-end lost its charm. Peggy's hand grew a little tighter upon her father's arm. The judge misunderstood, and walked on rather more pompously than before, supposing that this added pressure merely meant Peggy's increasing pride in his so noble bearing. But thereafter Peggy had nothing much to say. All the things that occurred to her were only things she could think, and they were things like this: "He promised. Why did he say he would do it if he never meant to try? I wanted him to win."

Days followed, and there was little for Peggy to think about but this one thing. She had packed her trust, as it were, in a cardboard box, and the bottom had fallen out. Then one day, shopping in Regent Street, she came unexpectedly upon Gerald's father, and he stopped and lifted his hat in the specially charming way that old men do, and smiled upon her.

She thought that he looked a little serious, perhaps because the promised day was drawing very near; and she had to ask: "Do you think Gerald is going to win this time?"

He looked at her quaintly. "Did you know?"

"Oh, yes, I knew." She did not add that most of it was her doing. And so he hesitated.

"He can if he will. But there's something going on. One or two men who see a good deal of Hastings have told me he's betting. There are one or two there at the club who are willing to bet on anything, and he's taking short odds. His boy's a clean-cut favourite. I went down myself to find out what odds I could get about my boy, and they seem to think nothing of his chance at all. They shrugged their shoulders. I can't understand it. These same few fellows offered me five to one."

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As her father steered her a little wide of these few young men she caught the sound of a familiar name.

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He paused. "Why are they laying against my boy like that?"

Peggy could only shake her head. Then Mr. Buchanan gravely pursed his lips. "I must go on. I took the odds gladly, of course. I am bound to believe in Gerald. But why are they doing it? What do they know?"

He held out his hand, a troubled, suspicious frown upon his forehead, lifted his hat again, and was gone. Peggy stayed for a moment looking sorrowfully after him, for she could have told him what they knew. They knew Gerald wasn't training.

SHE turned abruptly, and presently went to a call-box and telephoned Gerald's club. He was not to be found, but she left a message, and going home thoughtfully waited for him to ring up. The call came towards tea-time, and his voice travelled dutifully over the wire towards her.

"Hallo, Peggy! What's in the wind?"

She answered him curtly. "The race—do you know somebody's offering five to one against you?"

"Is that really so?" said Gerald. "Good odds, Peggy. I should take them." He was actually cheerful about it. She could have stamped her foot.

"I hate being taken in," she answered, quietly.

There was a moment's pause.

"H'm!" said Gerald, at last. "Now, I wonder, could we just have a wee spot of dinner somewhere to-night. What do you say?"

"No," said Peggy. "That's what I say."

Gerald was not to be denied.

"A cup of tea, then? Come along now. Couldn't you?"

"I didn't ring up for a meal," said Peggy.

There was a moment's silence.

"Can I call round for an hour to-night?" asked Gerald, rather more gravely. "Would you be in?"

"You cannot call round for five minutes," said Peggy, "until you learn how to behave yourself like a man. Whenever you come I shall be out." And then she hung up the receiver and turned, and, moving towards the window, lifted her hand to the curtain and stood there a moment so very unhappily that one might have supposed she was perfectly ready to cry.

And at his end Gerald stood looking at the receiver as though it had done him some personal injury for which it would never be forgiven. Then, when he had hung it up at last regretfully upon its hook, he went slowly into the smoking-room and sat down upon the nearest chair, resting his chin gently but firmly upon the backs of his folded hands. He could see Peggy now almost as clearly as though she were there before him, and she was extraordinarily dear and sweet. Further, she was a very gallant sportsman. He suddenly beheld a truth which had been slowly dawning upon him for some time. Millicent had seemed pretty to him, but she was pretty because she had plenty of time in which to make herself so. He knew no girl who could look so pretty with so little pains as Peggy. Millicent had been fascinating because, as he saw now, she must have had lots of experience at her back. Peggy, if he remembered rightly, had looked her best on a toboggan.

He rose up resolutely, collected his hat and stick, and set out calmly but sternly for Peggy's house. Long after tea-time was done he reached it, and knocked defiantly upon the door. A maid flung it open and faced him as if by witchcraft.

"I want Miss Saville."

The answer was immediate.

"Miss Saville is out."

He stared, half hesitatingly, waited a moment, then turned, and as he went patiently down the steps he removed his glasses unhappily from his nose and wiped them; whilst from behind the curtain of an upstairs room Peggy peeped shyly out to watch him go.

"If he thinks anything of me at all," she had told herself over and over again, "he will come here again—and again after that—and he'll keep on coming until I see him, and p'r'aps that will pull him together and make him try."

And as he passed out of the gate and turned to go up the road, she could not help reflecting that even now he really looked rather nice, especially perhaps from the back, for he seemed a little bowed, rather as though in sorrow, Peggy thought.

In one thing, however, Peggy was mistaken. Gerald did not come again—not even once. He had been told to stand in the corner, and he was not coming out until he was called. That night, indeed, as though in open defiance to all who cared most about him, he set his teeth grimly, slapped his hat rakishly on his head, and set forth uncaringly for Pepper's.

GENTLE sunshine had graced the day. Out of a little grey runabout, Peggy stepped gracefully on to the roadway, and there she stood for a moment looking about her. She could not see Gerald, nor was she quite sure whether she wanted to, for he would be certain to say, "So you have come?" And then she would not be able to make any special retort except "Why shouldn't I?" So she switched off her engine and began to walk slowly away

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from the car, and, as she went, fell to drawing off first one glove and then the other from her hands. So Gerald seized his chance to move up behind her, and when she stopped he was there at her side.

" Just listen a moment, Peggy. I want to tell you. I believe I'm going to win, and I've taken the lot of those bets ; they're all on me."

Peggy had neither turned nor evinced one solitary sign of interest.

" You said it was five to one and you were quite right. I meant it to be. They were so jolly clever and they thought me such a priceless fool. I led 'em on. I made them think I was running loose. I let them see me go into Pepper's at night. Sometimes they thought I'd had too much to drink. It was as good as a play. I took care the news was spread round about where I wanted it, but if you'd let me come round I would have told you all about it. As you knew part, I'd have rather you knew the truth, but I couldn't say on the telephone. Somebody might have heard. It was a battle of wits, you see. I drew them to five to one and then I sent down a fellow I know to take all the bets he could get. He did, and you couldn't get two to one to-day, nor evens. They're shaking away in their shoes. I don't really want their money, but everyone's always said I hadn't got any brains, and I wanted to show 'em."

Peggy did not move, but in a still, small voice she said at last :—

" So you think that you're going to win ? " And on that moment she spun on her heel—maybe she wanted to shake him wholeheartedly by the hand—but he must have been leaning forward, for the brim of her hat met his face, and he made one demoniacal dive to ground, scooped the air wildly with either hand in turn, and was stiffly still. She had knocked his pince-nez into the road and they were splintered to bits. If it had been intentional she could not have better answered, in effect : " I don't think you will."

" Oh, Lord ! " said Gerald, and seemed to be whispering to himself. " There's ditches and things I shall never see. I sha'n't know the way. I sha'n't have any idea how far the other fellow is on ahead."

" But don't let him get ahead ! " said Peggy, pleadingly.

" I must. You don't understand. He's a one-speed man and he'll cut out the pace. If I try to keep close with him all the way he'll wear me down. I don't run like that. I go my own speed, and then in the end I open out and go up at the finish. It's the only way I can win."

They were calling him. He heard Peggy say, " Oh, I *am* so sorry ! " Then he turned and began to go rather uncertainly towards the starter. Once he fell over a clump of bracken. He looked decidedly older. His countenance was drawn. The most dramatic moment of his life was here, and he, always at his worst in drama, was going to go through it like a buffoon. There was no time to think, no time to do anything. Wherever he looked the scene was one great blur. Peggy stood watching him go. She had wanted more than anything else to help him win, and all she had done had been to break his glasses. A ship might as well put to sea without a rudder. He was going to be beaten.

IT was the kind of race that a man may run in a nightmare—a variation of Blind Man's Buff. Hastings went right away with the lead, and all that Gerald could do was to wonder exactly where he was. Sometimes he said to himself : " I ought to have told them. They'd have let me go back for my spares." But always the answer he found in his conscience was the same. " I played a queer game with them, and they'll be glad enough now to get their own back on me. They wouldn't agree to wait. The laugh's on their side. It's all in the run of the game."

At times he seemed to be almost alone in the race. The way was tortuous and there were ditches. He never saw them until he was right on top of them ; and now and again he seemed to lose sense of direction and to wonder if he were right. Then he would hesitate at a corner, and at last a fluttering flag would jump into view right under his nose and beckon him on. So he would mumble complainingly and carry on into the fog.

Five miles at last were done. The only man who, so far as he knew, was ahead of him, other than Hastings, began to fall back. Gerald went past him cheerfully and struck into a network of trees. On the far side of these he knew that they came upon the main road home, and he began now to strain for clear vision. If he could only see where Hastings was running—if he could only spot his vest—if he could only see—and just then surely enough he topped a rise and, lo ! down in the hollow he could faintly distinguish a blurred patch of moving white ; and his heart sank. His man was too hopelessly out of reach. He almost gave up all hope, but instead he gathered his courage together and opened out into the first stage of a long last spurt. By slow degrees the figure ahead began to come back. He had heard the crackle of Gerald's feet in the undergrowth and he was straining to hold the lead, but it was no use at all. He was a one-speed man and Gerald was holding him down to it. He was going up a yard at a time. The white patch ahead swung into the road and Gerald plunged hard down after

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it and was there in his turn, when, there before him upon the road, he beheld as if by magic the figure of a girl with one hand eagerly outstretched. She was only a misty silhouette to him, but he knew her unmistakably for Peggy, and his heart fairly bounded with excitement. What on earth was that she was holding out? There was a little runabout car along the road, its engines boiling like fun. It was a most unlikely thought, but just supposing she had been home and fetched his spares? The humour of this idea struck him in spite of the grimness of the hour, and he began to chuckle. One never knew. Supposing she really *had* fetched his glasses? She had a pair at her house. She always had had since time immemorial. If she had really been, it meant——

Then he was almost alongside and he heard her voice. "He's right away up the road. Oh, do go after him. Can't you spurt? He'll beat you! It's the last mile—try all you can!"

"Right away up the road?" said Gerald, indignantly. "Why, he's here; here, right in front."

Without any more ado she thrust something into his hand.

"Look—your glasses!"

For perhaps one second he stared at them as he ran, just as though they represented some costly jewel, and then he set them excitedly upon his nose and looked ahead. And now for the first time he saw the course as if through binoculars, and perceived his fatal error. The man he was catching was not like Hastings in the least. This was a man he had left uncounted; Hastings was far away up the road—ever so far. Peggy was right. He was going to be beaten. Nevertheless, without one moment's needless gnashing of teeth, he saw his task and then he bent to it and began to run all out. He caught the man he had followed up and passed him with every sinew keyed to a raking stride, and then he settled down to the chase. Hastings was running almost mechanically, with elbows close to his side. He was streaked with mud and his legs were smeared and splashed. These points of detail Gerald took in as he drew up. He was catching his man now at every stride, but he did not believe he could keep on like this until the end. It was superhuman. Once Hastings turned round. Gerald was coming up like a wolf at his heels. His glasses were shining in the sun, and his cheeks were marked with sweat. The whole balance of his body was upon the toes, and Hastings took one look and knew that he must call forth now very atom that was in him. Just for a moment Gerald felt the difference and faltered as one might who had tried and failed, but it was for one brief moment only; then he took one last hold upon his courage and drew up alongside gallantly. He was almost past. He had done it. A cluster of men like a cinema crowd moved into the picture to mark the finish, and Gerald ran into them blindly and spun round into his father's eager arms. At once that little grey man began to beat him upon the back. "You've won! You've won!" There were almost tears in his voice. But Gerald was torn between sobbing breath and feeble laughter, and at last the laughter triumphed.

"You've no idea," he mumbled between ridiculous guffaws. "Peggy went all the way back and fetched my glasses. You know how they give a chap lemons in a Marathon. It was like that. She gave me my glasses just down the road. I would have caught him before only I couldn't stop laughing."

Which was not, of course, strictly true.

"WOULD there be room in there for me?" asked Gerald. He pointed inquiringly at the little runabout wherein Peggy sat leaning demurely upon the wheel and regarding him thoughtfully.

"I think I could fit you in."

"You went off in this, I gather," said he, "to fetch my glasses?"

'Feel it," said Peggy. "It's still white-hot. Twelve minutes there and eleven back. Did you remember leaving them with me? They were going to be an excuse to call. Well, you've got them back, so I'm rather afraid you've no excuse now at all."

Gerald climbed in, and Peggy let in the clutch with a slow smile. The car gave a little hum and started away down the road, and when it was safely out of all earshot Gerald looked once back over his shoulder and once to either side of him and then leaned over the wheel. There was one hectic moment's argument and the car swerved into the hedge and stopped.

"I shall have every excuse," said Gerald, continuing the conversation. "I very badly want you to marry me, but I don't quite know how it will ever be done. We have no money."

Peggy pursed her lips shrewdly. "I wish," said she, "that my father were half as rich as yours. I've been talking to that little old dad of yours, and I must say he used a different method to mine in teaching you how to remember, but it had a distinct effect."

Gerald sat up erect.

"What's that? Do you mean to say he was *pretending?*"

"We've all done a bit of pretending," said Peggy. "You pretended you didn't know how to behave."

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Without any more ado she thrust something into his hand. "Look—your glasses!"

"You also pretended."

"I?" said Peggy. "Yes, I pretended I didn't like you, didn't I?"

Gerald nodded his head once, grimly.

"Quite," said he. "Now, I wonder if you could pretend that you do?"

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WHAT MAKES A PLAY POPULAR?

by A·B·WALKLEY

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INVITED by a newspaper interviewer to forecast the drama of the future, M. Bergson answered: "If I could do that, I would sit down and write it." If I could say exactly what makes a popular play, not to sit down and write it would be sheer folly. Unfortunately, popularity can never be reckoned on in advance. Mount a play, and you leap in the dark. The public taste, if that word is appropriate, is nothing if not capricious. Those who cater for it are not less often misled by experience than undone by guesswork. Infinite pains of preparation, thousands of pounds, all the talent of a renowned author, may be expended upon a play that "falls headlong in destruction down to bottomless perdition." Another that has lain unregarded for years in a desk is fished out in desperation as a stopgap, takes the fancy of the town, and runs for a lustrum. "That great baby, the public," as Thackeray called it, is always crying for new toys; but the difficulty over babies, as parents know, is to find the right toy.

AMID all this uncertainty, one thing is certain. A popular play is not the same thing as a work of high art. It is only by a misuse of language that you can call "Hamlet" or "The Misanthrope" or "The School for Scandal" popular plays. They stand out as landmarks in dramatic history, they are masterpieces of literature, they are among the priceless assets of the human race. These are the characteristics that make plays great; they do not make them popular. For they demand from the spectator a certain equipment of knowledge, thought, and taste, which can only be found in a minority of playgoers; and is altogether beyond the resources of the majority. Indeed, it is only a minority of the minority, the "happy few," that can adequately appreciate them. For how do we fully appreciate a work of art—be it drama, lyric, novel, picture, statue, or sonata—how do we respond completely to its appeal, how do we squeeze out all the precious essence of it without losing a drop? The answer is plain: you have to put yourself in the author's, painter's, composer's place, identifying yourself with him and his point of view, remaking his work within yourself. That, it may be said, is an unattainable ideal. We cannot be Shakespeare, or Molière, or Sheridan. True, and there is a sense in which it may be contended that no one fully appreciated "Hamlet" but Shakespeare himself. But Shakespeare himself may lift us up momentarily to his level, warm our imaginations with his, so that we at least get a partial glimpse of what he saw steadily and whole. I suspect, by the way, that most playgoers' vision of "Hamlet" is even more partial than is generally supposed, that what really interests them in the play is its outward and visible signs—the bustle and business of the scene—rather than its inward and spiritual grace. Be that as it may, it is sufficiently clear that such a play demands a response which it is wholly out of the power of the unsophisticated playgoer to give. Between "Hamlet" and "Charley's Aunt" he would never hesitate. I shall be told by the fierce tribe of Shakespeareolaters that at the Old Vic, with its cheap seats, the great dramatist is acclaimed nightly by "popular" audiences. But they will not be using "popular" in the true sense. The purse is no criterion. There are many "popular" minds in the stalls, and many "highbrows" in the pit.

THE fact is, great plays, great works of art of any kind, require from their public not only an intelligent sympathy, but a readiness to take trouble, to put themselves out, to concentrate their attention. That is not the normal mood of the average playgoer, who prefers, like the Shah of Persia,

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"to have his dancing done for him." In great art there is always something strange, outside the region of the common task, the daily round, something a little disconcerting to our familiar habits of thought, something that exacts the pain of an effort to comprehend as the price of the pleasure of enjoying; and effort is just what the average playgoer is indisposed to make. He says, "I am a tired man, come here for rest and relaxation. Thrill or amuse me, but don't worry me to help you. Take me as I am, and let me have the sort of stuff I want to get, not the sort (mighty fine, I dare say, but over my head) you want to give." Most playwrights, even the greatest, try to compromise with this demand. Shakespeare himself did not ignore it. The compromise has damaged much good drama. But the dramatist who meets the demand uncompromisingly, wholeheartedly, all the time, is alone the author of the popular play.

He is often an unknown man—unknown, I mean, in circles of polite literature. I am told, and I have no difficulty in believing, that there are many plays familiar to popular audiences all the world round for years past, and "still running," that I have never even heard of. Some plays of vast popularity I have heard of—"East Lynne," for example—but never seen. It is the same story with "best sellers" among novels. The late Mr. Charles Garvice was, I am assured, one of our most popular novelists. I had the privilege of his acquaintance, and liked him much, but I never read a line of his in my life. There is another man, whose name I forget, with sales said to run into millions. These facts have nothing to do with literature. They are sociological statistics, like the number of railway-passengers last Bank Holiday, or of convictions for bigamy since the war. But they are also facts that cannot be ignored by students of human psychology.

LET us, then, consider the average playgoer from the psychological side, and try to see what his mind is made of.

A favourite way of approaching this inquiry has been through the science, if a science it is, of collective psychology, the psychology of the crowd. I have more than once wandered along that route myself. That a theatrical audience is a crowd and, as such, develops qualities that differ from those of the individuals composing it; that the emotional pitch is raised and the intellectual pitch lowered; that the contagious action of the crowd upon the individual tends to make him more excitable, less patient than he is, when alone—these are some of the considerations of collective psychology that may be used to determine the mental state of the average playgoer. But the so-called science is in its infancy, the mere mention of it seems to irritate many quite worthy people, and I propose therefore this time to leave it on one side. After all, it is really superfluous, for it ought to be a sufficiently simple matter to discover the mind of the average playgoer by the process of contemplation. He is an ordinary human being; that is to say, a person with the passions, affections, impulses, and desires common to us all, with a very limited



Between "Hamlet" and "Charley's Aunt" he would never hesitate

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experience of the world he lives in, and a few superficial notions, generally wrong, about past ages, without what he himself would call book-learning, and *a fortiori* without that familiarity with the classics of literature which is at any rate almost (purists would say quite) indispensable for the formation of a fine taste. Indeed, you may say that almost by definition he is no bookman. Books are to be enjoyed in solitude, but the playgoer is a gregarious animal. He takes his pleasure in company, rubbing shoulders with his fellows. It would be no fun for him to have a play performed before him, all by himself, like the mad King of Bavaria. The sense of solidarity with his fellows and the publicity of the occasion give him a sense of power. In the gallery he cheers when pleased, and when displeased shouts "Boo": vocal exercises that he would not enjoy in solitude.

This average playgoer, with his unchastened passions and appetites, his lack of systematic knowledge, his rudimentary taste, his advantage over the more cultured members of the audience in his disposition and power to make a noise, is a sufficiently formidable personage. He has the fortunes of the theatre at his mercy. All managers spend their money or other people's, most playwrights wear out their brains or their scissors and paste, in the hope of capturing his favour. His pleasure may turn the most artistically mediocre of plays into a popular triumph: his displeasure, though it may not kill a good play (the cultivated minority may save it from that), will impose on it the nearest alternative to a death sentence, a success "of esteem."

He exhibits the childlike curiosity, as well as the ferocity of primitive man. He must have, before everything, a "story," and it must be a story of external action, rapid, perpetually exciting him with the question of what is going to happen next, perpetually surprising him with what does happen, but ultimately never failing to furnish him with just what he wanted to happen. What he wants to happen always includes the natural, obvious sequels to the initial situation. The principal antagonists, people who obviously have something to say to each other, must meet and "have it out." These encounters are what Francisque Sarcey used to call the *scènes-à-faire*, and the average playgoer insists (as a rule, quite rightly) on seeing that he gets them. Also what he wants to happen always includes a "happy ending." He detests tragedy; he resents comedy of the sort which leaves all parties discomfited and derided. He is positively infuriated by plays that, like some of Ibsen's, end on an interrogation. He wants to go home comfortable. I feel sure that the bitter-sweet ending of Sir James Barrie's "Mary Rose," beautiful though it was, repelled the average playgoer. Further, he knows, in his own pet phrase, what he likes, though he does not know why he likes it or whether he is right to like it. The instinctive preferences of the average playgoer, untempered by training or by contrast with other preferences, without any theoretic basis, are hard and unyielding. Things novel to sight and sense he will gleefully welcome as the child welcomes them, but woe to the playwright who confronts him with a novel thought or a new morality!



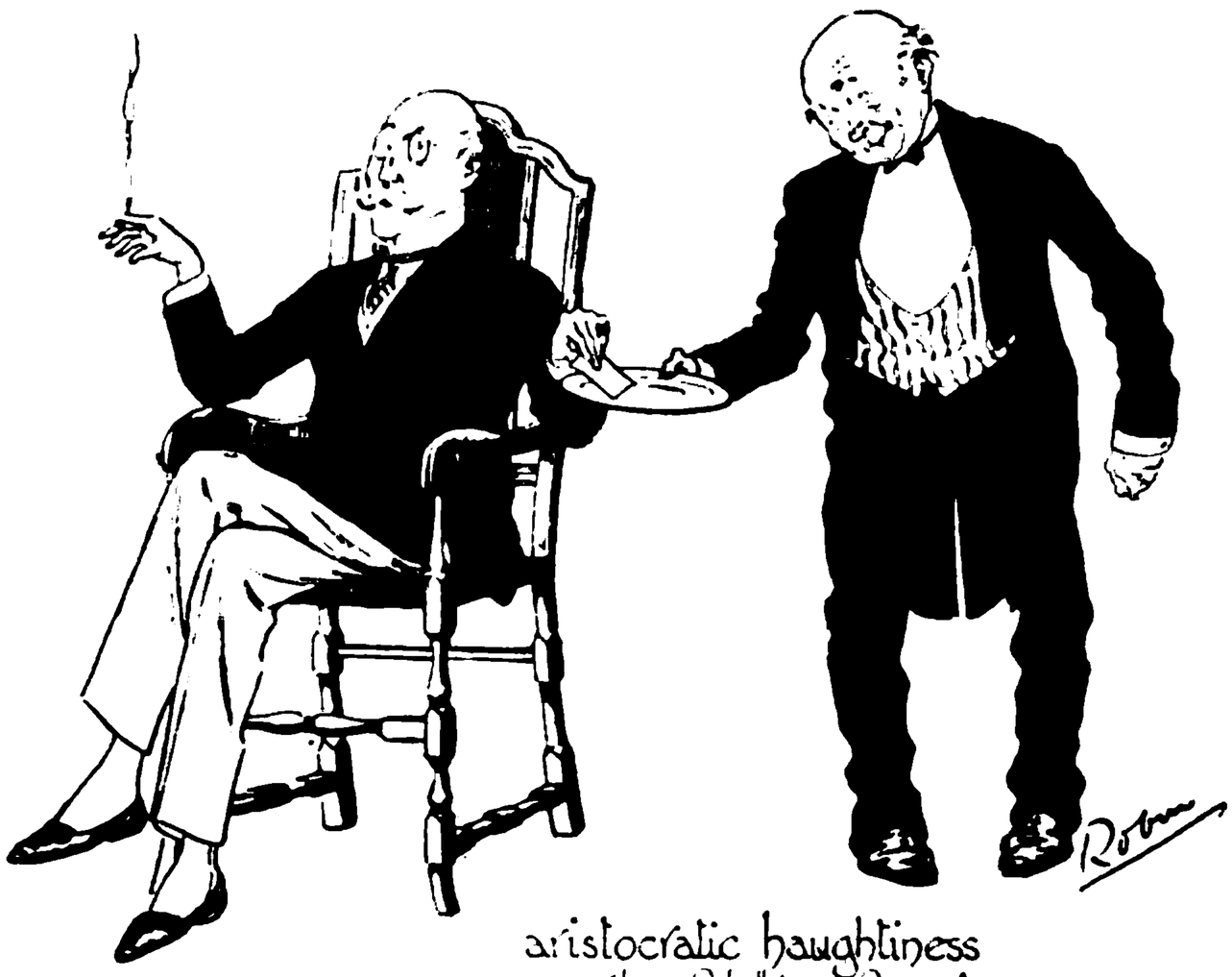
Indeed, on all questions of morality the average playgoer is eminently conservative. Whatever his conduct may be as a private individual, amid the public crowd of the theatre he is on his best behaviour, and quite sincerely; he stands there for the current

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morality of his time; he is nothing if not "respectable." It is not he, but the ultra-sophisticated playgoer who sniggers over "bedroom scenes" or tolerates the triumph of lover over husband in the domestic triangle. This does not mean that he will refrain from laughing at a coarse joke or from appreciating the liberal *décolletage* of the beauty chorus. It does mean that he draws a definite line between what he considers virtue and what vice, and likes to see his stage personages plainly on one side or the other. In other words, he prefers conventional characters that are "all of a piece" to the blended, particoloured, complex characters of real life: hence the stock stage puppets "hero" and "villain," "adventuress" and "persecuted saint." The moral dilettantism, the easy treatment of ethical questions as matter for ingenious casuistry, to be found in such "closet dramas" as "Le Prêtre de Némi" or "L'Abbesse de Jouarre," would simply shock the average playgoer. There is not a ha'porth of Renanism in him.

He is not cruel. There is much cruelty in Molière—I mean in the "popular," broadly farcical part of Molière. Presumably the French public's sense of fun overcomes its sense of pity. That only happens with our public in the rare scenes of blended humour and pathos, when there is generally a more ready response of laughter than of tears—or, after all, perhaps only seems to happen, for laughter is loud and tears are silent. As a rule, our average playgoer exhibits the "good-nature and good-humour of the English people" which Burke described as "ancient and inbred." He is often more indulgent than those who should be his betters. In a popular melodrama a few years ago there was a scene of an assault, or robbery or murder, or whatever, committed upon a rich old man in the dead of night. He appeared in a handsome nightgown with a long train. The stalls, used to pyjamas, burst into a roar of laughter. The pit were scandalized at the interruption. Possibly they saw no reason in the nature of things why rich old gentlemen should not wear long nightgowns with trains. In any case, they felt that such a trifle ought not to distract attention from a serious crisis of the play, and they roundly hissed the stalls for their bad manners. Here, I think, the honours rested with the average playgoer.

He is no cynic. He is the very opposite, an amiable sentimentalist. Though he may greatly enjoy mordant criticisms of the "knowing" Cockney kind directed against the social hierarchy or the powers that be, he will never accept a misanthropical view of the universe. For him it must be always tinged with what Meredith was fond of calling "rose pink." The drama of strict realism, of "relentless observation," the drama even of elegant raillery at fundamental institutions—love, marriage, parenthood, native land—merely annoys him. He likes everything romanticized, touched up, "twopence coloured"—masculine courage, female virtue, aristocratic haughtiness, the fidelity of aged domestics, and the pride of humble birth. In other words, the typical play of the people is melodrama. This may have the grossest absurdities, the wildest improbabilities of plot, it may (and generally does) have characters that are indistinguishable from wooden puppets, it may (and invariably does) imply a moral standard, a criterion of right and wrong, that is cramped, conventional, and commonplace, it may present in sum a radically false view of the world we live in; but, provided that the action is lively, continuous, and punctuated with startling surprises, and provided that the whole is suffused with the rose pink of the sentimentalist, it will be "all werry capital" for the average playgoer. Should it happen to be historical, it must be all romantic, "heroic," picturesque history, wherein great political consequences flow from trivial domestic accidents; the one thing it must never be is the history of the philosophic historian. For he is no philosopher, the average playgoer; history for him is a waxwork show, not the resultant of vast, obscure, slowly moving social forces. Nor is he accustomed to weigh evidence. What he



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wants, all he is able, to be in the theatre is an enthusiastic partisan, a Roundhead or a Cavalier, an "aristocrate" or a "sans-culotte," and to take good care that "the Whig dogs get the worst of it."

ODDLY enough, though by the nature of things he is generally a proletarian at home, in the playhouse he is on the side of the "swells." For they wear the gayest plumes and the gaudiest trappings, use the most genial oaths, are in short the most romantic figures present. Romance is the ideal resort for all who wish to get out of themselves, and your average playgoer visits the theatre with no other object.

It is the same craving for romance that so often carries the average playgoer away to the "pictures." The silent stage is much more consistently romantic than the spoken drama. True, it prides itself on the realism of its scenic setting, and photographs of actual places are incontestably more realistic than any painted backcloth can be, even if Mr. Crummles' real pump occupies the foreground. But the natural scenery photographed is virtually always of the kind known as romantic—sierras and prairies, alps and glaciers, morasses, bayous and cascades. Piccadilly Circus or the Place de l'Opéra becomes romantic in association with the strange things that are made to happen there; and the "real" motor-cars and fire-engines are romantic enough to run over Mr. Charlie Chaplin and his friends without hurting them. What could be more romantic than the personages—lantern-jawed Yankees or swarthy Dagoes, feathered Red Indians or furry Eskimos—who go through life (at an incredible pace) moving their lips inaudibly, leaving you to guess what they are saying and only sure of one thing, that it cannot be the balderdash written down on the screen ?

NOT that any balderdash is likely to incommode the average playgoer. For the spoken drama of his predilection would as a rule be much the better for being dumb. The sad truth must be told. The average playgoer not only has no ear for form in language, no sense of style, but he positively resents and abominates it. The well of English undefiled is either insipid or poisonous to him. To be sure, the average novel reader is only a little better. The frivolous Duchess in "The Gay Lord Quex" said that she read French novels "for the style." She would never have read the popular English novel or visited the popular English play for that. The popular novel adopts the style which the old India House Director recommended to a subordinate: "What style, sir, is preferred for official documents ?" "The style that *we* like, sir, is the humdrum." But to call the style of the popular play humdrum would be a fulsome compliment. What the average playgoer really likes is a jargon of solecisms, journalese, street slang, sham ornament, a flat, tasteless, pointless, slipshod lingo—you see I am at my wit's end to describe it, for it is something for which the English language has yet to find a distinct name.

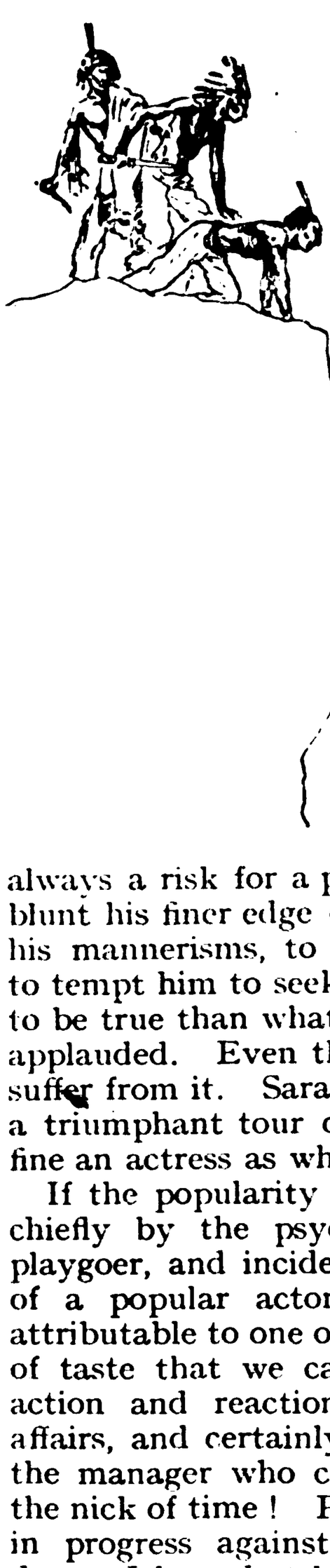
It must be admitted, however, that of this defective ear for pure English the average playgoer is only an extreme instance. The prose of our best modern playwrights, those who write for cultivated audiences, is generally lacking in distinction. Plays, as we know, and as perhaps the author of "Beau Austin" and the author of "Guy Domville" forgot, are something else than exercises in style. Nevertheless, a prose there is, proper to the theatre, simple and natural, terse and choice, and this is too seldom attained. Sir Arthur Pinero's dialogue is apt to be heavy and stiff, Mr. H. A. Jones's pedestrian, Mr. Shaw's diffuse. For a good prose style, proper to the theatre, you must go (with luck, he has his lapses) to Sir James Barrie, and (with no risk of disappointment) to Mr. Maugham and to Mr. A. A. Milne. I should perhaps apologize for digressing into naming names, which are of course merely names to the man who makes plays popular, the average playgoer.

Further concealment is useless, as they say in popular plays; the average playgoer is a philistine. Such art as he will tolerate in drama is of the poorest, most commonplace quality; his real interests are elsewhere. He demands satisfaction for his inbred and inveterate sentimentalism; but he has his strong sporting instincts, too, and, when he is not gratifying them at a football or cricket or boxing match, he is intent upon gratifying them in the theatre. He likes to see the game fairly played there, as elsewhere, and is quick to detect anything "on the cross." He appreciates hard hitting and knock-outs, and has a true sympathy for "the underdog" on the stage no less than in the ring. Popular melodrama may not be art, but it is energy and life.

ENERGY and life—these are what every popular play must have, however deficient in balance and measure the energy may be, and however unrepresentative the life of any actual life outside the playhouse. And players, to be popular, must be energetic and lively; their personality must be "striking"; they must have resonant voices, full-blooded temperaments, buoyancy, and even a little blatancy. For the average playgoer likes to be made to "sit up" and to be kept hot with excitement; acting

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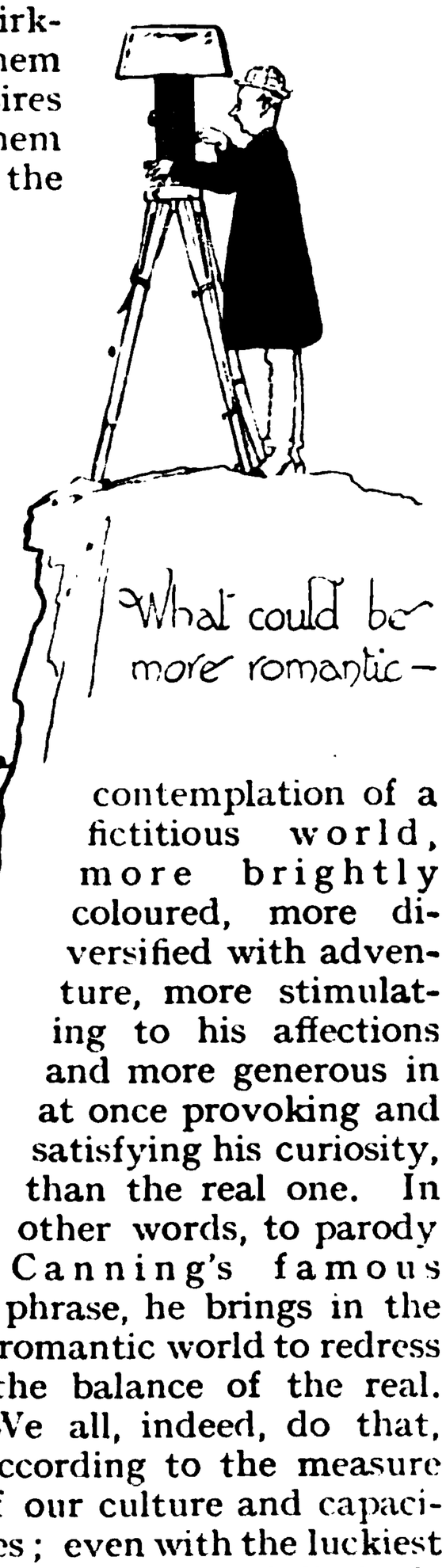
merely thoughtful, delicate, charming, is apt to leave him cold. It is the powerful personality of the player much more than his pure artistry that attracts and holds the average playgoer. Once caught in the attraction, he is faithful to his favourites, following them in all their plays just as he follows the mounts of his favourite jockey. He rather piques himself on his generous recognition of new talent, and sometimes applauds it so vigorously, and hails it as a success so prematurely, as to jeopardize its future career. Indeed, extreme popularity is always a risk for a player; it tends to blunt his finer edge of art, to indurate his mannerisms, to restrict his range, to tempt him to seek less what he feels to be true than what he knows will be applauded. Even the greatest players suffer from it. Sarah Bernhardt, after a triumphant tour of the world, was not so fine an actress as when she embarked.





If the popularity of a play is conditioned chiefly by the psychology of the average playgoer, and incidentally by the attraction of a popular actor, it is sometimes also attributable to one of those chance mutations of taste that we call fashion. The law of action and reaction governs most human affairs, and certainly the theatrical. Lucky the manager who can foresee a reaction in the nick of time! Probably there is reaction in progress against the sentimental melodrama I have but lately been describing. I speak conjecturally because I am seldom called upon to visit the theatres presenting such plays. But such melodrama as I do see seems to reflect rather the success of the "crook" novel, which reduces sentiment to a minimum and relies mainly on the romantic intrigues and counter-intrigues of individuals and detectives. "Bulldog Drummond" is a conspicuous instance. Here you have a popular play rather than a work of art: dramatized from a novel: dependent largely on a popular actor, energetic and lively, but far too conscientious an artist to be spoiled by popularity; and strong in that element of bustling, exciting, romantic plot that is an indispensable ingredient in every popular play.

After all, as the sage observed, there is a good deal of human nature in men. The average playgoer is not a student or a specialist or a fanatic; he is just a plain man who is seeking a little pleasure. Most of the realities of this workaday world he finds irksome, and some of them crushing, and he desires to escape from them for the evening by the contemplation of a fictitious world, more brightly coloured, more diversified with adventure, more stimulating to his affections and more generous in at once provoking and satisfying his curiosity, than the real one. In other words, to parody Canning's famous phrase, he brings in the romantic world to redress the balance of the real. We all, indeed, do that, according to the measure of our culture and capacities; even with the luckiest of us the measure is limited; the unsophisticated playgoer is only a little worse off for æsthetic equipment than the sophisticated. Despite appearances to the contrary, civilization advances, and the average of public taste in plays will gradually rise. Meanwhile, to please the people, a play must at least be good-humoured, decent in feeling, brimming over with energy and life. And that is something to go on with.



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THE UNFINISHED MASTERPIECE

BY THE LATE

STEPHEN PHILLIPS

ILLUSTRATED BY UGO MATANIA

CHARACTERS.	
ANDREO DONATI	*The most famous living painter in Italy.*
SILVIO . . .	*His pupil and friend.*
THE GOVERNOR	*Of the Convict Prison in Naples.*
ANTONIO . .	*A warder.*
THE YOUTH . .	*No. 6.*
Convicts and Warders of the Prison.	

SCENE I.

A transept in Milan Cathedral. ANDREO *working on a large canvas on an easel placed at right angles to the audience.* SILVIO *standing behind, watching him. There is a faint sound from the distant Cathedral organ.* ANDREO *turns from the picture with a sigh.*

SILVIO: The light is failing, Master, and you are weary.

ANDREO: Weary, yes, but not with toil, nor does my imagination flag at all, but at times a kind of foreboding takes hold of me that I shall never finish this picture, which was to be the masterpiece of my life—if I should die before the final touch is achieved!

SILVIO: Ah, no!

ANDREO: Well, but who knows? It is now ten years since I began this painting which I call "The Last Supper."

SILVIO: And it is now almost finished.

ANDREO: Finished? No! It is hardly begun.

SILVIO: But only two figures are lacking.

ANDREO: But those two figures are the picture, the two faces which I cannot paint, because, search as I may, I cannot find two faces so contrasted that the one shall convey to us the aspect of the Divine, the other of the vile; the one a mirror, as it were, of Heaven, the other the glass of Hell itself. On the one side the countenance of the Redeemer, on the other the features of the traitor and the thief. Ten years have I spent in this fruitless quest, and I am still as far from success as ever.

SILVIO: Is it necessary to discover two living faces so contrasted to be able to paint them? Cannot your imagination unaided throw them on the canvas?

ANDREO: The imagination, though its head be in Heaven, must still stand upon the earth; only faces of flesh and blood can launch me on my flight. Then, again, a fear possesses me that Nature herself will take some revenge upon me.

SILVIO: I cannot understand.

ANDREO (*pacing to and fro*): Think what my life has been from boyhood! The loneliness, the dedicated days, the set, unswerving purpose. Think how, in the pursuit of the Beautiful, I have discarded what is dearest to men; the promptings of the heart, the life of home, the love of women and of children. At times, Silvio, I dread lest Nature, who will not be denied, shall aim at my heart at last, crying: "This, too, was given thee! It is not enough to aspire; thou shalt also learn to feel!" Cover the canvas, my friend—listen! the music swells, and now swoons into solemn death—it ceases!

(*As the music ceases a figure of a young man is seen coming from the steps of the chancel. He has a face of singular beauty, and as he approaches the light from the transept window strikes full on him.*)

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"Are you willing to sit to me here, each morning, after Matins?"

Silvio, leave the canvas a moment and look! See that figure advancing and thrown into sudden glory? Now, now, the head, the face—wonderful! Is it possible that after these years my triumph comes? Stop the youth, Silvio, and bring him to me hither,

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lest he should vanish suddenly and I have been deceived by devils !

(SILVIO *arrests the youth and brings him to the* MASTER.)

SILVIO (*addressing the young man*) : You, sir, to-day are highly honoured. You have heard of Andreo Donati, the Master-painter of all Italy ?

THE YOUTH : Indeed, who has not ?

SILVIO : You stand before him now.

THE YOUTH (*bowing low*) : Master !

ANDREO : You, then, have occupation here in the cathedral ?

THE YOUTH : Master, I sing here in the choir, at Matins and at Vespers. Sometimes, indeed, I am chosen to sing alone, and then am I most happy.

ANDREO : But apart from this, have you no more earthly trade or calling on which you live ?

THE YOUTH : My trade is that of a worker in bronze and gold.

ANDREO : And a beautiful trade ; but does it bring much money ?

THE YOUTH : Alas, Master, no ; and I have to sustain my mother, who is a widow.

ANDREO : You would then be pleased, even for her sake, to add to your earnings ?

THE YOUTH : Yes, indeed. But how ?

ANDREO : I am working here, as you may see, upon a large canvas in which many faces are necessary. I have all but two. Your face would give me a sufficient suggestion of one of them. Are you willing to sit to me here, each morning, after Matins and while the light lasts ? If so, I will pay you as liberally as you would desire.

THE YOUTH : Yes indeed, Master, and it is not only the pay—it is to feel that I am transmitted on your canvas to immortality.

ANDREO : That, then, is agreed ; and I will not wait a day. I have waited so long ! To-morrow morning.

THE YOUTH : Master, I shall not fail you.

(*He bows humbly and joyously, and leaves the cathedral with quick steps.*)

ANDREO : Is it not wonderful, Silvio, that of a sudden, just as I have begun to despair, that face should be sent me ? Oh, not itself perfect, but, as it were, the human suggestion of what I intend, the proper fuel to my imagination. Oh, why should night intervene between me and my dream ? I am athirst to begin—I shall know no sleep to-night. Well, my son, come with me to my lonely house. I cannot bear as yet to be alone, and after we will sup together and drink the old Chianti. (*Laying his hand on* SILVIO'S *neck.*) Oh, Silvio, only one more step for me to climb ! The other face, the face of the betrayer !

SILVIO : And yet it seems to me well-nigh impossible, Master, to find in humanity two such contrasted faces as you desire ; to suggest with the one a love celestial, with the other a hate infernal.

ANDREO : Having found one, I may yet find the other. Who knows ? For to-day this joy is enough !

(*They proceed outwards,* ANDREO *with his arm round his pupil's neck.*)

SCENE II.

(*A gloomy corridor in the convict prison of Naples. Time, evening. Ten years have elapsed.* ANDREO *and the* GOVERNOR *of the prison are pacing to and fro together.*)

GOVERNOR : You are, of course, aware, sir, that what you request is not merely unusual, but entirely unprecedented ?

ANDREO : Sir, I am fully aware of it, yet I still venture to persist in my request.

GOVERNOR : You will clearly understand, then, what I grant is to the Master-painter of Italy, and not to a private individual ?

ANDREO : Clearly.

GOVERNOR : You ask, then, that twelve of the most abandoned convicts in the worst prison of Italy shall be filed before you, that you may perhaps discover amongst them a face sufficiently base to transfer to the great canvas on which you are working ?

ANDREO : Exactly.

GOVERNOR : I have already given orders that this shall be done, but remember that the men whom you will see, desperate as they are, may be roused to open fury if they suspect that they are paraded before you merely for the purpose of portrayal. I have to request, then, that you will stand back in the shadow here, and make no sign except to me privately.

ANDREO : I will do so. (*He retires into a shadowy recess.*)

GOVERNOR (*calling to an attendant*) : Are the men of whom I spoke to you ready ?

ANTONIO : They are waiting for your orders, sir.

GOVERNOR : Then have them filed before me, singly and slowly.

ANTONIO (*in loud voice*) : No. 1—12 this way ! Pass slowly !

(*The convicts, who are in chains, begin to pass through the corridor in single file. Five have passed, and the sixth now passes* ANDREO, *who remains in shadow.*)

ANDREO (*bursting from recess*) : Stop that one ! The sixth ! I have it at last, I tell you, the face I have so long vainly sought ! The face of the betrayer !

GOVERNOR : No. 6 fall out ! The rest back to the cells.

(*The convicts go off in charge of* ANTONIO. NO. 6 *remains.*)

This fellow, who has the face you want, is under sentence of death, and dies at dawn to-morrow.

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ANDREO: Only just in time then!

GOVERNOR: What do you propose to do with him?

ANDREO: I have only time to make a rough sketch which will fix his face.

GOVERNOR: No. 6, the Master-painter of Italy, Andreo Donati, desires to portray you to-night, before you die.

No. 6: Oh, come now! You have the right to take my life—that is law, but not to take my portrait. I object!

ANDREO: The fellow is right, and, as I believe it is at times permitted for one condemned to enjoy some special privilege on his last night on earth, I suggest that I may be allowed, in return for the favour he is granting me, to provide him with a flask of wine and as many cigarros as he can smoke, while I am making my sketch of him.

No. 6: Ah, now we are talking business! Under the conditions I consent to sit.



"Stop that one! The sixth! I have at last the face I have so long vainly sought."

GOVERNOR: Well, having yielded so far, I will yield this further. No. 6, back to your cell; there you will await the Master. (No. 6 *slinks off*.) This fellow is the most notorious of all our criminals. Not only had he a hand in assassination, but for a paltry sum he also betrayed his accomplice to death. The earth is well rid of him!

ANDREO: Did I not exclaim: "The face of the betrayer"?

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SCENE III.

(*One of the cells of the condemned in the convict prison.* ANDREO *and* NO. 6 *discovered.* ANDREO *is sketching at an easel the face of the condemned man. A flask of Chianti and cigars upon a table at the side of* NO. 6. *Dawn peers through the cell grating.*)

ANDREO: A little to the right; so. (*He continues to sketch.*) Your right hand half closed, resting on the table; the other thrust downward out of sight—so.

NO. 6: Time's passing, Master. I could do with another drink and another smoke.

ANDREO: One moment only; now, could you peer as though you were listening for the approach of someone outside?

NO. 6: How's that, then?

ANDREO: No, no, put your hand down—listen with your eyes!

NO. 6: I say, this isn't in the bargain. Well, now?

ANDREO: Don't move; stay as you are. I implore you not to move! (*He adds a few touches.*) Now then, drink and smoke.

NO. 6: Many thanks, Master. (*He takes a long draught of wine and lights a cigar.* ANDREO *still puts final touches to the drawing, glancing at* NO. 6 *from time to time.*) They keep you here so short of food that a drop of wine almost makes one drunk in a moment. I suppose I may walk about for a minute or so?

ANDREO: Yes, yes; I have got all from you that I want.

NO. 6 (*shivering*): It's getting near the time, isn't it?

ANDREO: Yes. Are you prepared?

NO. 6 (*slouching to and fro*): I shall be—with another glass. The thing is to get oneself numbed, as it were. I am beginning to arrive at that feeling, and this I owe to you.

ANDREO: And I owe to you more than you would ever suspect. Per Bacco! We are here together, you and I. You have rendered me the greatest service one man can render another. You are about to die, but if it can console you at all, I will tell you that this drawing here will enable me to finish the picture of a lifetime.

(*A* WARDER *enters.*)

WARDER: No. 6, the priest is here. Will you see him?

NO. 6: The priest? No! (*Pouring out another glass.*) This is my priest and final consolation. (*Exit* WARDER.) Well now, Master, would you say that mine was a difficult face to paint?

ANDREO: No, no; except that any face which is strange is difficult.

NO. 6: My face is strange then?

ANDREO: Strange in this way only, that I have never seen it before.

NO. 6 (*lurching towards* ANDREO *and blowing tobacco in his face*): You have never seen my face before?

ANDREO: Undoubtedly not!

(*Enter* ANTONIO.)

ANTONIO: No. 6, you have five more minutes.

(*Exit* ANTONIO.)

NO. 6: Five minutes did he say? May I look at that drawing?

ANDREO: Look, then.

NO. 6: Umph! Throw your mind back a bit, Master. Were you ever in the city of Milan?

ANDREO: Milan! There I was born and lived half my life.

NO. 6 (*lighting a fresh cigar*): There's not much time, but there's time for another—umph! You know the cathedral there?

ANDREO: Why, it was in that same cathedral that I began and almost finished the painting of my life, but to complete it I lacked one face, and to-night I have it!

NO. 6 (*lurching towards him, smoking fiercely*): I hear them! They are coming for me!

(*A tramp of steps is heard without.*) Quick then—ah, one more glass! You remember perhaps a young fellow who sang there in the choir?

ANDREO: Why, of course! His face is the great, the central face of my picture.

NO. 6 (*pointing to portrait*): This is it!

ANDREO (*starting up*): This is it? Man, man, between that face and this is all the distance between Heaven and a Hell!

(*Enter two* WARDERS.)

WARDERS: No. 6!

(*They advance and touch him on the shoulder.*)

NO. 6 (*approaching* ANDREO *and speaking in his ear*): Master, I was that chorister! You have painted me twice! Fell in bad hands—no matter—too long to tell now.

ANDREO: You, you!

NO. 6 (*turning to* WARDERS): I am ready. (*Then turning again to* ANDREO.) That's right, Master.

(*He is taken off.* ANDREO *sinks in his chair, burying his face in his hands.*)

ANDREO: God, God!

(*A report of musketry is heard. Enter* GOVERNOR OF JAIL.)

GOVERNOR: It is over, Master. Earth is well rid of the wretch. The only service he ever did was the service he did to Andreo Donati. May I say how proud I am to have been able to furnish you with the means of finishing that masterpiece, for which all Italy is waiting?

ANDREO: Never, now! If God can finish so the pictures he begins, my picture shall be left for ever unfinished. (*He dashes drawing on the floor and sets his foot upon it as the* CURTAIN FALLS.)

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The FUNNY MAN'S DAY

by

STACY AUMONIER

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK NEWBOULD

HIS round, fat little face appeared seraphic in sleep. If only the hair were not greying at the temples and getting very, very thin on top, and the lines about the eyes and mouth becoming rather too accentuated, it might have been the head of one of Donatello's *bambini*. It was not until Mrs. Lamb, his ancient housekeeper, bustled into the room with a can and said: "Your water, Mr. Basingstoke," the intrusion causing him to open his eyes, that it became apparent that he was a man past middle age. His eyes were very large—"goose-gog eyes" the children called them. As elderly people will, it took him some few moments to focus his mentality. A child will wake up and carry on from the exact instant it went to sleep; but it takes a middle-aged man or woman a moment or so to realize where they are, what day of the week it is, what happened yesterday, what is going to happen to-day, whether they are happy or not.

As to James Jasper Basingstoke, it was not his business to indulge in the slightest apprehension with regard to his condition of happiness or unhappiness. He was a funny man. It was his profession, his mission, his natural gift. From early morning, when his housekeeper awakened him, till playing with the children—all the children adored him—practising, interviewing managers and costumiers, dropping into the club and exchanging stories with some of the other "dear old boys," right on until he had finished his second show at night, it was his mission to leave behind him a long trail of smiles and laughter. Consequently, he merely sat up in bed, blinked, and called out:—

"I am deeply indebted to your Lambship."

"Nibby's got hiccups," replied that lady, who was not unused to this term of address. Nibby was Mrs. Lamb's grandson. His real name was Percy Alexander. The granddaughter's name was Violetta Gladys, and she was known as Tibby. They lived next door. These names, of course, had been invented by the Funny Man, who lived in a world of make-believe, where no one at all was known by his real name. He himself was known in the theatrical profession as "Willy Nilly."

"I am distressed to hear that," exclaimed Willy Nilly. "Hiccups at nine o'clock in the morning! You don't say so! I always looked upon it as a nocturnal disease. The result of too many hic, haec, hock-cups."

"You must have your fun, Mr. Basingstoke, but the poor little fellow has been very bad ever since he woke up."

Willy Nilly leapt out of bed and rolled across to the chest of drawers. He there produced a bottle containing little white capsules, two of which he handed to Mrs. Lamb.

"Crunch these up and swallow with a little milk, then lie on his back and think of emerald-green parrots flying above a dark forest, where monkeys are hanging by their tails. In our profession the distress of hiccups is quite prevalent, and we always cure it in this way. A man who can't conquer hiccups can never expect to top the bill. Now, tell Master Nibby that, dear lady."

Mrs. Lamb looked at the white capsules interestedly.

"Do you really mean that, Mr. Basingstoke?"

The little fat man struck a dramatic attitude.

"Did you ever find me not a man of my word, Lady Lamb?"

"You are a ONE," replied the housekeeper, as she retired.

The little fat man thrust out his arms in the similitude of some long-forgotten clumsy

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exercise. Then he regarded himself in the mirror.

"Not too thumbs-up, old boy, not too thumbs-up. It's going, you know. All the Apollo beauty, the slender waist, 'the unmatched form and feature of blown youth, blasted with ecstasy.' Oh, you little depraved ruffian, go and hold your head under the tap."

No, no, it was not the business of Willy Nilly to be depressed by these reflections, either in the mirror or upon the mind. He seized the strop suspended from a hook on the architrave of the window and began to flash his razor backwards and forwards, whilst he sang:—

"Oh, what care I for a new feather-bed
And a sheet turned down so bravely-O?"

The Raggle-taggle gipsies accompanied him intermittently throughout the whole operation of shaving, including the slight cut just beneath the lobe of his left ear. The business of washing and dressing was no perfunctory performance with the Funny Man. He had a personality to sustain. Moreover, the programme of activities for the day included attendance at a wedding. There is nothing at which a funny man can be so really funny as at a wedding. One funny man at least is almost essential for the success of this time-honoured ritual. And this was a very, very special wedding: the wedding of his two dearest and greatest friends, Katie Easebrook, the pretty comedienne, and Charlie Derrick, that most brilliant writer of ballads. A swell affair it was to be, in Clapham Parish Church, with afterwards a reception at the Hautboy Hotel —everything to be done "in the best slap-up style, old boy."

It was fully three-quarters of an hour before he presented himself in the dining-room below. Mrs. Lamb appeared automatically with the teapot and his one boiled egg.

"You'd hardly believe it," she said, 'but Nibby took them white pills, and his hiccups is abated."

'Ah! What did you expect, my good woman? Was Willy Nilly likely to deceive an innocent child? Did he think of emerald-green parrots and a dark forest?"

"I told him what you said, Mr. Basingstoke. Here's the letters and the newspaper."

The Funny Man's correspondence was always rather extensive, consisting for the most part of letters from unknown people, commencing, "Dear Sir, I wrote the enclosed words for a comic song last Sunday afternoon. I should think, set to music, you would make them very funny," or, "Dear Sir, I had a good idea for a funny stunt for you. Why not sing a song dressed up as a curate called 'The higher I aspire I espy her,' and every time you come to the word higher you trip up over a piece of orange-peel? I leave it to you about payment for this idea, but I may say I am in straitened circumstances and my wife is expecting another next March."

THERE was a certain surprising orderliness about the Funny Man's methods.

Receipts were filed, accounts kept together and paid fairly regularly, suggestions and ideas were carefully considered, begging-letters placed together, with a sigh, "in case anything could be done a little later on, old boy." Occasionally would come a chatty letter from some old friend "on the road," or from his married sister in Yorkshire. But for the most part his correspondence was not of an intimate nature. His newspaper this morning remained unopened. The contemplation of his own programme for the day was too absorbing to fritter away nervous energy on public affairs. Whilst cracking the egg he visualized his time-table. At ten o'clock Chris Read was coming to try over new songs and stunts. At eleven-fifteen he had an appointment with Albus, the costumier in Long Acre, to set the stamp of his approval upon the wig and nose for his new song, "I'm one of the Goo-goo Boys." Katie and Charlie's wedding was at twelve-thirty, and the wedding breakfast at the Hautboy at one-forty-five. In the meantime he must write two letters and manage to call on old Mrs. Labbory, his former landlady, who was very, very ill. Poor old soul! She'd been a brick to him in the old days, when he was sometimes "out" for seven months in the year, out and penniless. It was only fair now that he should help her a bit with the rent and see that she had—everything she needed. Willy Nilly's life had been passed through an avenue of landladies, but the position of Mrs. Labbory was unique. He had been with her fifteen years, and she was intimate with all his intimates.

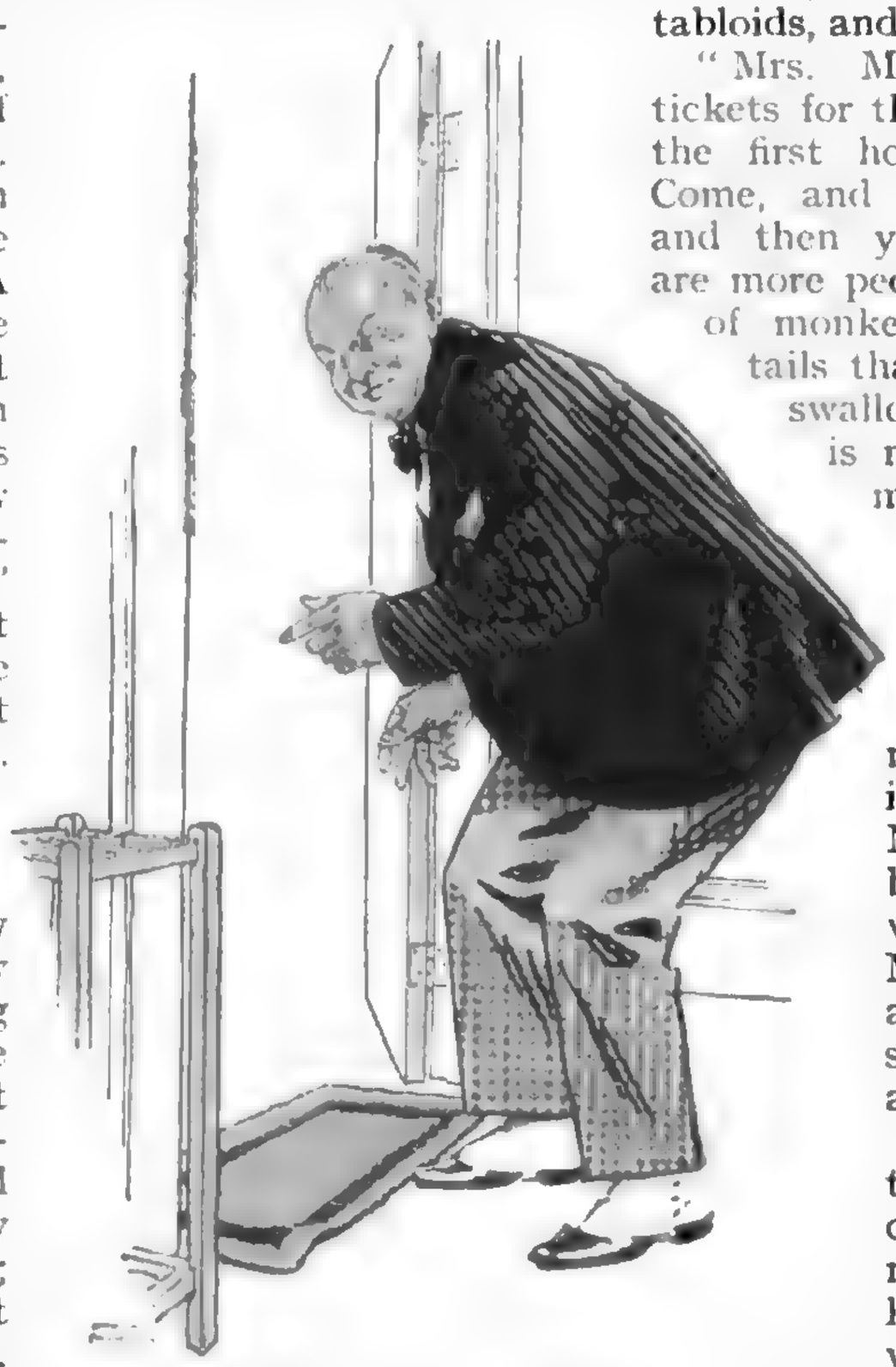
At three-forty-five was a rehearsal with the Railham Empire orchestra. He must get that gag right where he bluffs the trombone-player in his song:—

"Oh, my in-laws, my in-laws, why don't you leave me be?"

Perhaps a cup of tea somewhere, and then an appointment at five-fifteen with Welsh, to arrange terms about the renewal of contract. Knotty and difficult problems—contracts. Everyone trying to do you down—must have a clear head at five-fifteen. If there's time, perhaps pop into the club after for half an hour, exchange stories with Jimmy Landish or old Blakeney. A chop at six-thirty—giving him an hour before making-up

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for the first house. On at eight-twenty. Three songs and an encore—mustn't forget to speak to Hignet about that spot-light; the operators must have been drunk last night. Between shows interview a local Pressman and a young man who "wants to go on the stage, but has had no experience." Dash round for a sandwich and a refresher. On again at ten-twenty-five. Same three songs, same encore, same bluff on the trombone-player. Ten-fifty, all clear. Clean up and escape from the theatre if possible. A last nightcap at the club, perhaps? Oh, but Bird Craft wanted him to toddle along to his rooms and hear a new song he had just acquired, "a real winner," Bird said it was, about "The Girl and the Empty Pram." Must stand by an old pal. Some time during the day he must send two suits to be cleaned and order some new under-linen. A beastly boring business ordering vests and pants. He knew nothing about the qualities of materials—hosiers surely did him over that. Really a woman's business; women knew about these things. Mrs. Lamb? No, not exactly Mrs. Lamb. He couldn't ask Mrs. Lamb to go and buy him vests and pants. A woman's business, a woman——



"Why, if this isn't a sixpence under the mat!"

Heigh-ho! Nearly ten o'clock already! Chris Read might arrive any minute. The Funny Man dashed downstairs and ran into the house next door. Tibby had already gone to school, but Nibby had escaped because at the moment of departure his attack of hiccups had reached its apotheosis. Now he was in trouble because it had left off, and his mother now decided he had been putting it on. It took the Funny Man fifteen minutes to calm this family trouble. Nibby putting it on! Nibby playing the wag! Oh, come! fie, and for shame! Besides, did Nibby's mother think that he, Dr. Willy Nilly, the eminent specialist of Harley Street, was a quack? Were his remedies spurious remedies?

"Did you think of emerald-green parrots in a dark wood, Nibby?"

"Yes."

"And monkeys hanging by their tails?"

"Yes."

"There, you see, Mrs. Munro! It was a genuine case and a genuine cure."

"If he really had it, Mr. Basingstoke. I don't believe it was thinking about monkeys what cured him; it was them little white tabloids, and we thank you kindly."

"Mrs. Munro, here are two tickets for the Railham Empire for the first house to-morrow night. Come, and bring your husband, and then you will see that there are more people cured by thinking of monkeys hanging by their tails than there are cured by swallowing tabloids. That is my business. I am a monkey hanging by its tail. And now I must be off. Good-bye, Nibby, old boy. Why, if this isn't a sixpence under the mat! Well, well, this is an age of miracles! No, you keep it, old boy. Invest it in visions. Good-bye, Mrs. Munro. Come round and see me after the show to-morrow. Toot-a-loo, my dear."

Chris was waiting on the doorstep, a fresh-complexioned young man inclined to corpulence. His face glowed with a kind of vacant geniality.

"Well, old boy, how goes it?"

"I've got a peach this morning, Willy, old boy. I think you'll like it."

"Good boy! Come on in."

Chris sat at the piano and unwrapped a manuscript score.

"I think this ought to win out, old boy," he said. "It's by Bert Shore. It's called 'The Desert Island.' You see, the point is this. You're a bit squiffy, old boy. You see, red nose and battered top-hat, and your trousers turned up to the knees. You know how, when it's been raining on a tarred road, it looks like water. Well, we have a set like that—it's really a street-island—in Piccadilly or somewhere. You're on it, and, seeing all this shining water, you think you're on a desert island and the lamp-post's a palm-tree. You take off your shoes and stockings, and there's some good business touching the wet road with your bare toes. See, old boy? There's a thunderin' good tune.

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Listen to this—tum-te-too-te-tum-te-tum, rum-te-too-te-tum-te—works up, you see, to a kind of nautical air; then gets back to the plaintive desert stuff—rum-tum-tum-tum-te-tum. Then here's the chorus. Listen to this, old boy :—

'Lost in the jungle,
Oh, what a bungle,
Eaten by spiders and ants.
Where is my happy home?
Why did they let me roam?
Where are my Sunday pants?'

Good, eh? What do you think? Make something of it, old boy, eh?"

The little man's eyes glowed with excitement. Oh, yes, this might assuredly be a winner. It was the kind of song that had made his reputation. The tune of the chorus was distinctly catchy, and his mind was already active conceiving various business.

"Let's have a go at it, old boy," he said.

He leant over the other's shoulder and began to sing. He threw back his head and thrust out his fat little stomach, his eyes rolled, and perspiration streamed down his face. He was really enjoying himself. He had just got to

"Lost in a jungle,
Oh, what a bungle,
Eaten by spiders and ants,"

when there was a knock at the door, and Mrs. Lamb thrust her head in and said :—

"A telegram for you, Mr. Basingstoke."

"Eh? Oh, well—er, never mind. Yes, thank you, my dear, give it to me."

He opened the telegram absently, his mind still occupied with the song. When he read it, he exclaimed :—

"Good Lord! poor old Joe! Yes—no, there's no answer, my dear. I must go out."

Mrs. Lamb retired.

'Poor old Joe! Stranded, eh?"

"What is it, old boy?" said Chris.

"Telegram from Joe Bloom. He says, 'Can you wire me tenner very urgent, stranded at Dundee.' Poor old Joe! he has no luck. He was out with 'The Queen of the Sea' Company. They must have failed. Excuse me, Chris, old boy."

The Funny Man hurried out of the room and ran downstairs. He snatched up his hat and went out. When he got round the corner he ran. He ran as fast as he could to the High Street, till he came to the London, City, and Midland Bank. He filled up a cheque for fifteen pounds and cashed it. Then he ran out of the bank and trotted puffily across the road to the post-office.

"I want to telegraph fifteen pounds, old girl," he said to the fair-haired lady behind the wires. Filling up the forms took an unconscionable time, and there all the while was poor old Joe stranded in Dundee, perhaps without food! Dundee! Dundee of all places—a bleak, unsympathetic town, hundreds of miles from civilization. Well, that would help him out, anyway. True, he had had to do this twice before for Joe, and Joe had not so far



He began to sing—he was really enjoying himself.

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paid him back, but Joe was a notoriously unlucky devil, and he, Willy Nilly, topping the bill at the Railham Empire, couldn't let a pal in.

When he got back to his own drawing-room Chris was stretched at full length on the sofa, smoking a cigarette and drinking whisky-and-soda.

"Sorry to have kept you, Chris, old boy."

"It's all right, old boy. I've just helped myself to a tot from the sideboard."



"Well, Martha, old girl, how goes it? Merry and bright, eh?"

"That's right. That's right. Now, let's see; it's a quarter to eleven. I'll have to wash out this trial, old boy. I shall be late for Albus. I like that song. I'd like to have another go at it. Have another tot, Chris, old boy. I'll join you; then I must be off."

But he didn't get to Albus that morning, because on leaving the house he remembered that he hadn't called on old Mrs. Labbory. He *must* just pop in for a few moments. It was only ten minutes' walk away. He purchased a fowl and a bottle of Madeira, and hurried to 27, Radnor Street. He found his old landlady propped up on the pillows, looking gaunt and distant, as though she were already regarding the manifestations of social life from a long way off and would never participate in them again.

"Well, Martha, old girl, how goes it? Merry and bright, eh? Oh, you're looking fine. More colour than last week, eh? . . . Eating better, old girl?"

A voice came across the years:—

"I'm not so well, Jim. God bless you for coming."

"Of course I come. I come because I'm a selfish old rascal. I come because I want to. I know where I'm appreciated, eh? Ha, ha, ha! Now don't you think you're getting worse. You're getting on fine. We'll soon have you about again, turning out cupboards, hanging wall-papers. Jeminy! Do you remember hanging that convolvulus wall-paper in my bedroom in the Gosport Road, eh?"

The Funny Man slapped his leg and the tears rolled down his cheeks with laughter at the recollection of the episode.

"Do you remember how I helped you? And all I did was to step into a pail of size, nearly break my leg, and spoilt the only pair of trousers I had! Ha, ha, ha! He, he, he! I had to go to bed for four hours while you washed them out and aired 'em. Oh, dear!"

Old Mrs. Labbory began to laugh too, in a feeble, distant manner. Then she stopped and looked at him wistfully.

"You going to Katie Easebrook's wedding, Jim?"

"Eh? Oh, yes, I'm going, old girl. I'm going straight on now."

He hadn't meant to mention this. There's something a little crude in talking about a wedding to a dying woman. He paused

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and looked uncomfortably at his feet. The voice from the past reached him again :—

"You ought to have married Katie Easebrook."

"Eh? What's that? Me? Oh, no, old girl; what are you talking about? Me marry Katie Easebrook? Why, I wouldn't have had the face to ask her. Not when there's a good fellow like Charlie about."

Like some discerning oracle came the reply :—

"Charlie's a good feller, a good-looking feller, too; but you would have made her a better husband, Jim."

With some curious twist of chivalry and affection, the little man gripped the old woman's hand and kissed it.

"You've always thought too much of me, Martha, old girl."

"I've had good cause to, Jim. . . . Good-bye."

He walked a little unsteadily down Radnor Street.

"Life is a lovely thing," he thought as he hurried on. "Poor old Martha!—she's going out."

HE was, of course, late for the service in the church. In some way he did not regret this. He slipped quietly into a seat at the back, unobserved. A hymn was being sung, or was it a psalm? He didn't know. There was something about a church service he didn't like. It disturbed him at some uncomfortable level. Charlie was standing by the altar, looking self-conscious and impatient. Katie was a ghostly, unrecognizable figure, like a fly bound up in a spool in a spider's web. Thirty or forty people were scattered on either side of the centre aisle. He could only see their backs. The parson began to drone the service, slowly enunciating the prescribed purposes of the married state. Willy Nilly felt a flush of discomfort. It somehow didn't seem right that Katie should have to stand there before all these people and have things put to her quite so straight.

"Rather detailed, old boy," he thought. "Perhaps that's why a bride wears a veil."

When it was over he walked boldly up the aisle and followed a few intimates into the vestry. He was conscious of people indicating him with nudges, and whispering, "Look! That's Willy Nilly."

In the vestry Katie's mother was weeping, and Katie appeared to be weeping with one eye and laughing with the other. A few relatives were shaking hands, kissing, and talking excitedly. Someone said, "Here's Willy Nilly."

Charlie gripped his hand and whispered :—

"Come on, Willy, old boy; kiss the bride."

The bride looked up at him with her glorious eyes, and held out her arms :—

"Dear old Willy! So glad you came, old boy!"

He kissed the bride all right, and held her from him.

"God bless you, dear old girl! God bless you! May you—may all your dreams come true, old girl!"

In most weddings there is a streak of pathos, but in theatrical weddings the note is predominant. It is as though the lookers-on realize that these people whose lives are passed in make-believe are bound to burn their fingers when they begin to touch reality. Perhaps their reactions are too violent to be bound within the four walls of a contract.

Katie's wedding certainly contained a large element of sadness.

"She looks so sweet and fragile. I hope he'll be good to her," women whispered.

The lunch at the Hautboy Hotel was hilarious to an almost artificial degree. A great deal of champagne was drunk and toasts were prolific. It was here that Willy Nilly came in. The Funny Man excelled himself. He was among the people who knew him and loved him. He made goo-goo eyes at the bridesmaids, he told stories, he imitated all the denizens of a farmyard, he gave a mock conjuring display, and his speech in proposing the health of the bride's father and mother was the hit of the afternoon. (He was not allowed the principal toast, as that had been allocated to Charlie's father, who was a stockbroker.)

To the waiter who hovered behind chairs with napkined magnums of champagne he kept on saying :—

"Not too much, old boy. I've a rehearsal at three-forty."

Nevertheless he drained his glass every time it was filled. The craving to be funny exceeded every other craving. Willy Nilly had knocked about the world in every kind of company. It took a lot to go to his head. It was almost impossible to make him drunk. When at three o'clock it was time for the bride and bridegroom to depart, he was not by any means drunk, certainly not so drunk as Charlie, but he was in a slightly detached, comatose state of mind. He kissed the bride once more, and to Charlie he said :—

"God bless you, old boy! Be good to her. You've got the dearest woman in the world."

And Charlie replied :—

"I know, old boy. You've been a brick to us. You oughtn't to have sent the cheque as well as all that silver. Good luck, old boy!"

"Oh, my in-laws, my in-laws! why don't you leave me be?" It seemed but a flash from one experience to another, from pressing

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the girl's dainty shoulders in a parting embrace to stamping about on the draughty stage and calling into the void :—

"Now, Mr. Prescott, I want a little more slowing down of this passage. Do you see what I mean, old boy? It gives me more time for the business."

The gag with the trombone-player was considerably improved. Must keep going, doing things—a contract to sign at five-fifteen. He was feeling tired when the rehearsal was over—mustn't get tired before the two shows to-night. Perhaps he could get half an hour's nap after seeing the agent, before it was time to feed. Someone gave him a cup of tea in the theatre, and a dresser told him a long story about a disease which his wife's father got through sitting on a churchyard wall, waiting for the village pub to open at six. There appeared no interval of time between this and sitting in front of the suave, furtive-looking gentleman named Welsh who "handled" him on behalf of the United Varieties Agency. He was conscious of not being at his best with Welsh. He believed that he could have got much better terms in his new contract, but somehow the matter did not appear to him to be of great importance. He changed the subject — told Welsh the story about the sea-captain and the Irish stewardess. Welsh laughed immoderately. After all, quite a good fellow, Welsh. He was anxious to get away and see some of the boys at the club. Jimmy would certainly have a new story ready. He hadn't seen Jimmy for four days.

Jimmy was certainly there, and not only Jimmy but old Barrow and Sam Lenning, and a host of others. He had a double Scotch whisky, and proceeded to take a hand in the game of swopping stories. At one time something seemed to jag at his consciousness and say, "Do you really think much of this kind of thing, old boy?" and then another voice replied: "What does it matter? . . . They've just arrived at Brighton railway station. In another ten minutes they'll be at the Ship."

"I thought you were going to have a chop at six-thirty, old boy," someone remarked to him, suddenly.

"So I am, old boy."

"It's seven-fifteen now, Willy."

Good gracious! so it was. Well, he didn't particularly want a chop. He would have a couple of sandwiches and



"May all your dreams come true, old girl!"

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another double Scotch. He was quite himself again in his dressing-room at the theatre. He loved the smell of grease-paint and spirit-gum, the contact of fantastic whiskers and clothes, the rather shabby mirror under a strong light. His first song was going to be "Old Fags," the feckless ruffian who picks up cigarette-ends. The dresser, whose name was Flood, and who always called him Mr. Nilly, was ready with his other three changes.

"Number Five's on," came the message down the corridors. Good! There was only "Charlemagne," the equilibrist, between him and his people."

Willy Nilly had got to love "his people," as he mentally designated them. He knew them, and they knew him—the reward of many years' hard work. He loved stumbling down the corridors, through the iron door, and groping his way amidst the dim medley of the wings, where gorgeous unreal women and men in bowler hats patted him as he passed and whispered :—

'Hallo, Willy, old boy! Good luck!"

He loved to wait there and hear his number go up; the roar of welcome which greeted it was music to his soul.

"Number Seven!"

The orchestra played the opening bars, and then with a queer shuffle he was before them, a preposterous figure with a bright red nose, a miniature bowler hat, and a fearful old suit with ferns growing out of the seams, and a heavy sack slung across his back.

"Old Fags! Old Fags!
See my collection of fine old fags.
If you want to be happy,
If you want to be gay,
Empty your sack
At the fag-end of the day."

Oh, yes, you ought to see Willy Nilly in Old Fags." The *habitués* at the Railham Empire will tell you all about him. The doleful, wheezy voice, the quaint antics, and then the screamingly funny business when he empties the sack of cigarette-ends all over the stage; and, of course, at the bottom is a bottle of gin and a complete set of ladies' 'undies" (apparently new and trimmed in pink). Then the business of finding innumerable cigarette-ends in his unmanageable beard.



A lightning change, and he came on as "The Carpet Salesman."

On that night Willy Nilly was at his best. A lightning change, and he came on as "The Carpet Salesman," in which he brought on a roll of carpet, the opportunities concerning which are obvious. Then followed "The lady who works for the lady next door." The inevitable encore—prepared for and expected—followed. A terrible Russian—more whiskers, red this time—singing :—

"O Mary-vitch,
O Ada-vitch,
I don't know which.
Ich lieber ditch.
I told your pa
I'd got the itch.
He promptly hit me
On the snitch!"

It was difficult for Willy to escape after this valiant satirical digression.

He fled perspiring to his dressing-room.

"Give me a drink, old boy!" he gasped to the lugubrious Flood.

He had smothered his face in cocoa-butter when there was a knock at the door.

"Mr. Peter Wilberforce, representing the *Railham Mercury*."

"Ah, yes! Come in, old boy."

Mr. Wilberforce was in no hurry to depart. He had a spot—"just a couple of fingers, old boy"—of whisky. He wanted a column of bright stuff for the next issue of the weekly. "Is Railham behind the other Suburbs in Humour? Interview with the famous Willy Nilly—our local product."

"You just give me a lead," said Mr. Wilberforce. "I'll fill in the padding."

Willy Nilly found turning out the bright stuff immediately after his performance the most exhausting experience of the day. He was quite relieved when at the end of forty minutes there was a knock at the door, and a woman, with a lanky son, was shown in. This was the young man who wanted to go on the stage. The Pressman departed, and the mother started forth on a long harangue about what people said anent her son's remarkable genius for acting. Before Willy Nilly knew where he was he was listening to the boy giving imitations of Beerbohm Tree and Henry Ainley. It was quite easy to tell which was meant to be which, so Willy grasped the young man's hand, and said :—

"Very good, old boy! Very good!"

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He promised to do what he could, but by the time the mother had gone all over the same ground three times he found that it was too late to pop round to the club again. It was nearly time to make up for the second show. He dozed in the chair for a few moments. Suddenly he thought :—

"They've had dinner. They're probably taking a stroll on the front before turning in."

He poured himself out another tot of whisky and picked up his red nose.

"O God, how tired I feel !—not quite the man you were, old boy."

He found it a terrible effort to go on that second time. "Old Fags" seemed flat. He began to be subtly aware that the audience knew that he knew that the song wasn't really funny at all. At the end the applause was very mild. "The Carpet Salesman" went even worse.

"Pull yourself together, old boy !" he muttered, as he staggered off. It wouldn't do. A man who tops the bill can't afford to not bring the house down with every song. He made a superhuman effort with "The lady who works for the lady next door." It certainly went better than the others, just well enough to take an encore rather quickly. On this occasion he altered his encore. Instead of "Mary-vitch," he sang a hilarious song with the refrain :—

"O my ! hold me down !
My wife's gone away till Monday !"

At the end of the first verse he felt that he had got them. Success excited him. He went for it for all he was worth. Willy Nilly was himself again. The house roared at him. He had the greatest difficulty in escaping without giving a further encore. As he stumbled up the stone staircase to his dressing-room he suddenly thought :—

"They've gone to bed now."

The imperturbable Flood followed him in, laden with properties.

"I'll just have one more spot, Flood, old boy."

How tired he was ! He cleaned up languidly and got into his normal clothes.

"Well, that's that, old boy," he said to Flood. "Now I think we'll toddle off to our bye-byes."



"You're tired, old boy."

"Excuse me, Mr. Nilly, wasn't you going round to Mr. Bird Craft's ?"

Eh ? Oh, yes, for sure ! He'd forgotten about poor old Bird. Couldn't exactly let an old pal in. Well, he would have a cab, and hang the expense. Just stay a few minutes—dear old Bird would understand. But he stayed an hour at Bird Craft's. He listened to three new comic songs and a lot of patter.

"Yes, you've got a winner there, old boy," he remarked at the end of each song.

IT was nearly one o'clock when he groped his way up the dim staircase of his own house. The bedroom looked bleak and uninviting. It had never struck him before in quite that way. He had always liked his bedroom, with its heavy mahogany furniture and red plush curtains ; but somehow to-night the place seemed forlorn—as though something was terribly lacking.

"You're tired, old boy."

He undressed and threw his clothes carelessly on chairs and tables. He got into bed and regarded the room, trying with his tired brain to think what was wrong. His clothes ought not to have been thrown about like that, of course. He felt that they and he were out of place in the large room. A strange feeling of melancholy crept over him.

"It's badly ordered—it's all badly ordered, old boy."

He had a great desire to cry, so weak he felt. But no, a man mustn't do that ; a funny man certainly mustn't. His mind wandered back to his old mother. He remembered the days when she had taught him to pray. He would give anything for the relief of prayer. But he couldn't do that, either. It didn't seem exactly playing the game. He had put all that kind of thing by so long ago. He despised those people who led unvirtuous lives, and then in the end turned religious. He wasn't going to pretend. He turned out the light and closed his eyes. He would neither weep nor pray, but he must express himself somehow. Perhaps he compromised. Certainly his voice was very near a sob, and his accents vividly alive with prayer, as he cried to the darkness :—

"Charlie, old boy, be good to her. For God's sake be good to her."

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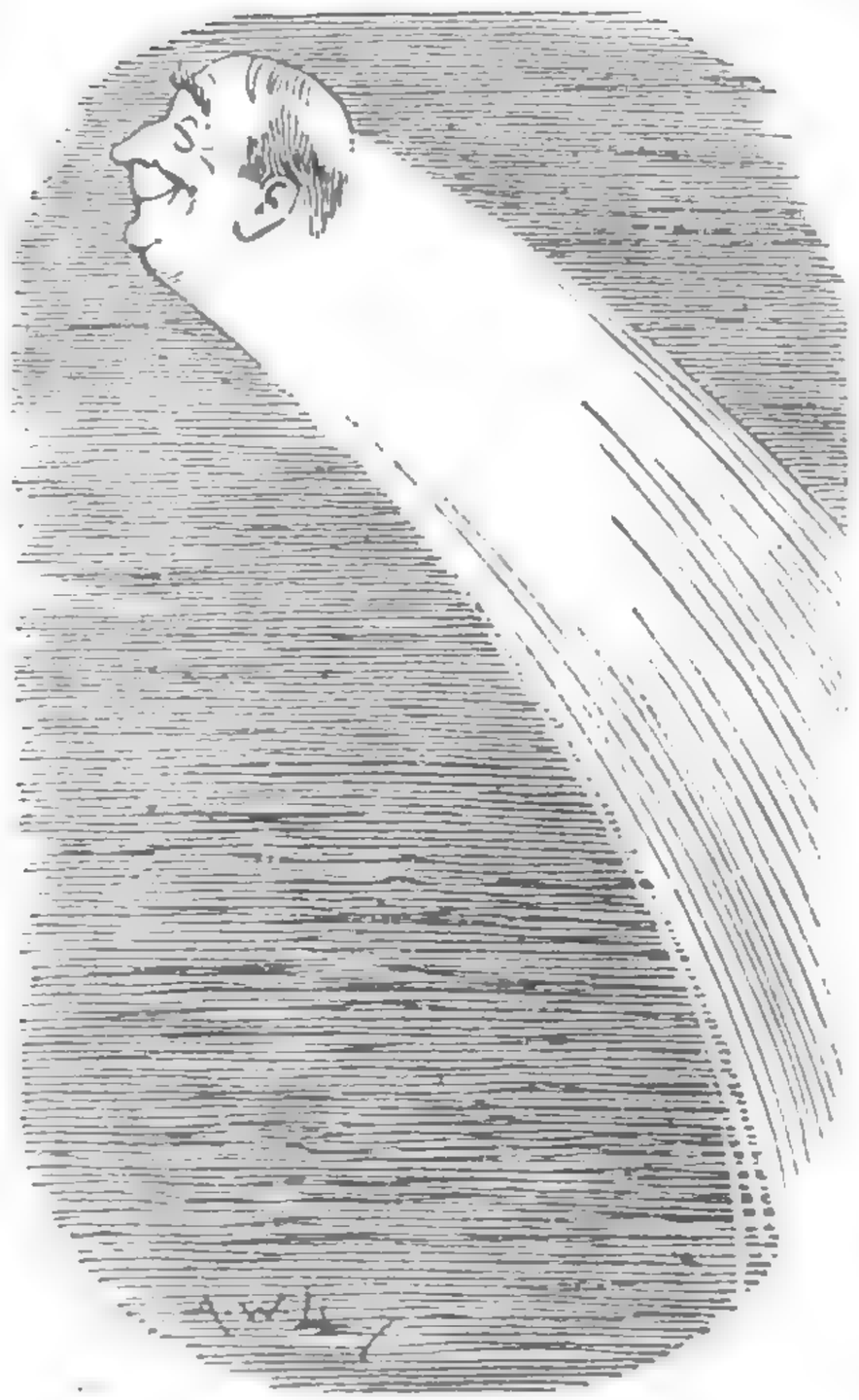
A SELF-MADE CHANCELLOR

Sir Robert Horne's Meteoric Career

by

Robert K. Risk

"SIR ROBERT HORNE, after barely two years in Parliament, has succeeded Mr. Chamberlain at the Exchequer—a meteoric ascent in the political firmament which recalls the Younger Pitt, and makes Mr. Churchill dizzy." In these words *Punch*, in April, 1921, succinctly described what has been so far the climax of Sir Robert Horne's career, and illustrated the occasion in a thumbnail sketch which we reproduce. William Pitt's capture of high office at the age of twenty-three is never likely to find its parallel. The social and political conditions of 1782 reinforced his notable and precocious intellectual gifts; and he inherited office much as Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Churchill have done in their own generation. This is an important factor in comparing Sir Robert Horne with his contemporaries. William Pitt became Chancellor at the age of twenty-three and Sir Robert Horne at the age of fifty—each of them after some two years of political apprenticeship. Pitt inherited political influence and support: Sir Robert Horne has created it by his own personality.



"A meteoric ascent."

By permission of "Punch."

Robert Stevenson Horne was born in 1871, and, like many other Scots destined to eminence, was a Son of the Manse. His father was the Established Church minister of Slammanan, a moorland mining district of unprepossessing visage in the heart of Stirlingshire; which is to say, the heart of Scotland also, with all deference to the claim of Midlothian. In his early teens he was sent to George Watson's College, a democratic secondary school in Edinburgh, famous for the soundness of its education and the robust quality of its Rugby football. In October, 1887, while still in his sixteenth year, he did credit to his school by taking the eighteenth place in the Glasgow University Bursary competition. This test, in those days, long before the Carnegie Endowment was dreamt of, sometimes decided whether it was possible or not for a lad to maintain himself through a university course. The present Chancellor kept himself by bursaries and scholarships from his earliest undergraduate days till he was called to the Scots Bar in 1896. As an undergraduate he always had enough to eat, as all "lads of parts" had not always, in the middle decades of last century. Many came to Glasgow University from the Highlands with a sufficient supply of salt herring, oatmeal, and cheese to keep them in life till the end of term, or till the

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mid-term " Meal Monday " let them go home to replenish their supplies. Robert Horne's family lived in Glasgow during his undergraduate years : so he was saved from the rigours of student lodgings. Student hostels had not then been invented, and the social side of student life, for some two thousand undergraduates, was only beginning to struggle towards feeble expression through debating societies and political clubs. There was a dismal kind of refectory in a college basement ; the Students' Union was discussed only as a celestial possibility, and a Students' Representative Council was regarded by many members of the Senate as a revolutionary body, threatening the hitherto paternal, and sometimes rather stepfatherly, relations of professor and undergraduate.



Sir Robert Horne as a young man.

Photo. Crook

To pass the Bursary Examination in those days entitled a student to escape all the junior and middle classes and graduate M.A. in three years instead of four. In his first and second years Robert Horne " began as he meant to go on," taking the seventh place in Senior Latin and the first in Logic, each in a class of two hundred students. His special bent was towards Philosophy. So he "sat under" Edward Caird, afterwards Master of Balliol, who on his return to Oxford was described by the late Harry Cust, of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, as " a kind of a washy, right-wing, Neo-Kantian-Hegelian." But our university in the 'eighties was very proud of Edward Caird, just as it was of his two even more distinguished colleagues, Lord Kelvin and Sir Richard Jebb. Jebb's prose versions of Sophocles were the first signpost for many students towards the beauty of literature, in their exquisite clarity of expression and harmony of rhythm. Robert Horne was First Prizeman in each of his two sessions with Caird, and was thus marked out assuredly for a First Class in Philosophy, which he achieved in 1893. In the previous year he captured a John Clark Fellowship, the equivalent in Philosophy of the Balliol-Snell Exhibition in Classics. He found time to take a leading part in the Dialectic Society, the equivalent of the Oxford Union, being vice-president or president in each of three years. He was also elected to the highest post in the Students' Representative Council, shortly after that body came into being ; and in his fourth year he laid down his political moorings as president of the University Conservative Club, the chief business of Scottish University political clubs being to elect a Lord Rector every three years, after a vast expenditure of personal and even scurrilous " literature," and of peasemeal, for external application to the voters on polling day.



A present-day portrait.

Photo. Lafayette.

After a year in a Glasgow solicitor's office, Robert Horne, having chosen the Scots Bar as his walk in life, took his law classes in Edinburgh University, maintaining there his Glasgow record of successful hard work, and graduating LL.B. The traditions of the Scots Bar demand that the candidate should spend an idle year immediately before admittance ; which is no hardship if the candidate has private means. Not being thus blessed, Robert Horne applied to the Faculty of Advocates for permission to earn his living during that twelve months. He passed his idle year on the staff of University College, Bangor, North Wales, as Lecturer on Philosophy.

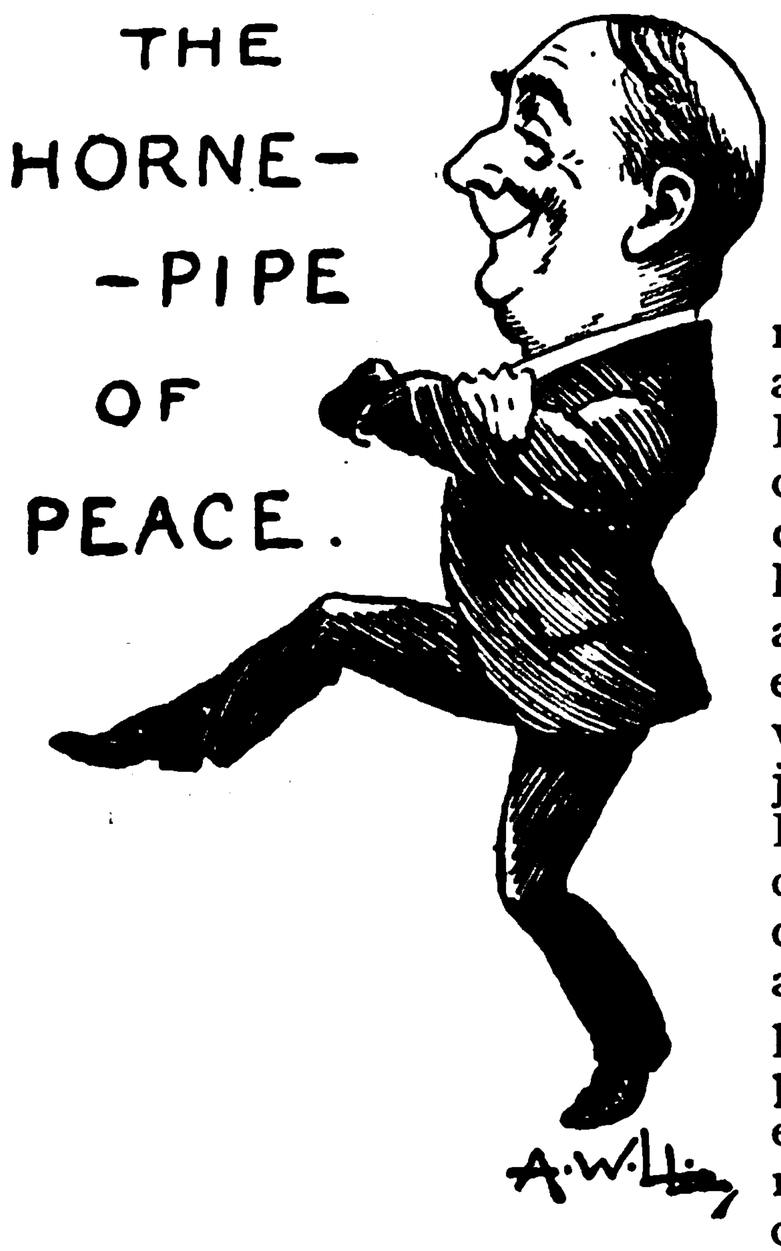
In 1896 he was called, and quickly made a place for himself as a junior who specialized in commercial law, and particularly in mining cases, in those days plentiful.

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A Self-made Chancellor



During the next fourteen years he steadily advanced in his profession, incidentally fighting Stirlingshire twice in the Unionist interests, and being soundly defeated in that haunt of Liberalism. Political service was then part of the price a young advocate had to pay for any Government preferment, either within the Bar or to the Bench. Robert Horne entered into party politics with zest, and proved himself a first-class fighting man in that often ridiculous and intellectually squalid arena of big loaves and little loaves, open doors and doors half ajar. At the Scots Bar he made many friends, as well as a sound reputation and a substantial income; and in 1910 he felt justified in taking silk. On these fourteen busy years, one of his colleagues in the Parliament House sends me this note:—



"Horne, like other Sons of the Manse, acquired a practice sooner than most young advocates. His work increased so quickly that he took silk at an unusually early age—when he was just forty. He was a conscientious, courageous, and forcible pleader, being particularly effective in maritime causes, and he could find his way through the tangle of decisions which elucidate or obscure the Workmen's Compensation Acts. His buoyant geniality and store of anecdote used to attract groups of eager listeners. He was always a popular and notable figure in the Parliament House; but while he told many stories of others, few were told of him—a significant and flattering fact."

This seems an appropriate place to relate the only story I know against the Chancellor. He told it to me a few years ago with immense gusto. Very early in his official career he had occasion to say good-bye to an admiral who was giving up a shore billet. Sir Robert was then a lieutenant-colonel, lent to the Admiralty. He put the friendly question, "Would you care to take a job afloat, now that you are leaving a billet on shore?" The reply was, "*No*, sir. I shall stay ashore till every damned Army colonel has gone to sea!"



In 1916, Mr. Robert Horne, K.C., surrendered a lucrative practice, which had brought him within easy range of a Judgeship in the Court of Session, and offered himself for National Service. National Service in this country was then in a highly fluid or chaotic state; and he soon made his way to France, to report on and help in reorganizing transport. In 1917 he was Assistant Inspector-General of Transportation, with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel R.E. When Sir Eric Geddes went to the Admiralty in that year, he borrowed Colonel Horne, to act as Director of Material and Priority in the Admiralty. On the principle that the willing horse gets the burden, the Admiralty Labour Department was added to his duties in 1918; and the value of his work was acknowledged by appointment as Third Civil Lord of the Admiralty, in the same year. In 1919 he was promoted to be the first Minister of Labour, during a time of unrest when the lamp-posts in Whitehall sometimes assumed a sinister and menacing countenance. But perhaps because he had

The sketches on these pages adorned the menu of a recent Dinner of the Parliamentary Press Gallery, at which Sir Robert Horne was the guest of honour.

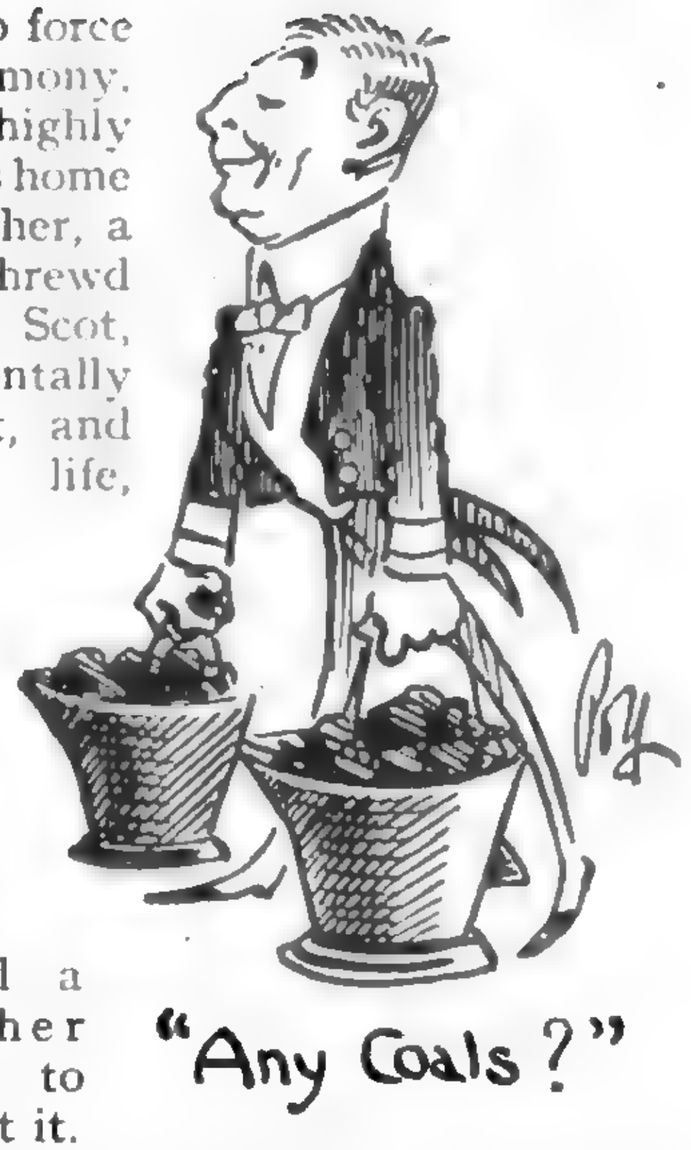
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been "baptized in the sump," as he told the Miners' leaders once, he handled Labour questions with understanding as well as tact. In 1920 he succeeded Sir Auckland Geddes as President of the Board of Trade; and now he may be the first Chancellor of the Exchequer, during the past quarter of a century or so, to reduce income-tax instead of increasing it. He certainly has considerable scope in that direction.

There is no mystery about the causes contributing to Sir Robert Horne's rise to eminence. His later portraits show the quiet confidence that derives from mental power and a sense of efficiency. He had considerable gifts from Nature, and he has used them to advantage. He has "made his face" by years of hard and determined work and by self-denial. I remember asking him, more than ten years ago, why he never smoked. "It never really got much hold on me," he said. "I used to smoke over my papers at night, but I thought it took the edge off me for work in Court next morning, so I dropped it." He has always possessed robust health, and a cheerful disposition even at 8 a.m. on a raw winter morning in Glasgow, on his way to consume thus unseasonably the fruits of Divine Philosophy. He has a keen sense of fun, under thorough Parliamentary control. Therefore pompousness and condescension, which often follow success in life, have never assailed him. In talk he could interest, and find interest in, a commercial magnate, Mr. Bernard Shaw, or a Slammanan miner. In the Asquithian phrase, Sir Robert Horne "has charm," which implies, among other things, ready tact and kindness of heart. A defect of these qualities sometimes is an inability to say "No" when it is necessary; which is much more difficult than saying that "the answer to that question is in the negative." Sir Robert plays a sound game of bridge, golfs well enough to enjoy it, and is a keen, though on the whole a humane, game-shot. The gossips of the Press have so far failed to force him into matrimony.



He has been highly fortunate in his home life. His mother, a delightfully shrewd and humorous Scot, is still mentally vigorous, alert, and interested in life, after more than eighty years of it. I happened to be in her house soon after her son's appointment as Minister of Labour, and a member of her family began to chaff her about it.



"You know," she said, "that you always used to pray to God to make your Bertie a minister (meaning a minister of the Kirk). It looks as if He had taken you up wrong." The answer struck me as a model of Scots pawkiness, tinged with the Scot's readiness to jest about religion. "Ah, well, you know, my dear," the old lady twinkled, "God often answers our prayers in the way that is best for us in the end." Another saying from the same source, when political promotion followed fast on promotion was: "Why don't you leave these men (Mr. Lloyd George, Sir Eric Geddes, and Co.) and come back to your own place?" That was quoted and stupidly interpreted in a London paper as if it were an utterance of simplicity and inexperience. On the contrary, it expressed practical, intuitive insight into the chances of political life. Only Time, and the hazards and cross-currents of politics, can decide whether a mother's second-sight pierced the future shrewdly, or was over-anxious.



NOTE.—The Editor desires to thank "Matt" and "Tom Tit" of the "Evening Standard," "Poy" of the "Evening News," "Low" of the "Star," and Mr. A. W. Lloyd of "Punch," for courteous permission to reproduce their amusing caricatures of Sir Robert Horne.

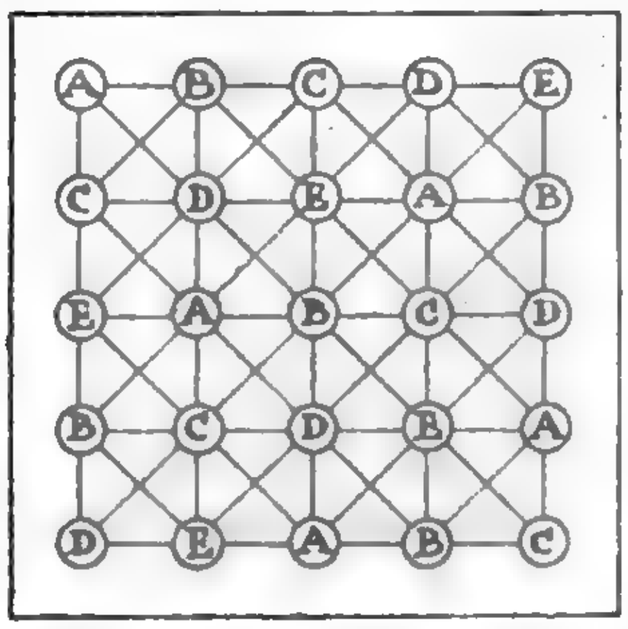
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PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

597.—THE QUINQUELITERAL.

It will be seen that the five letters, A, B, C, D, E, are so arranged that no letter will be found repeated on any line. It is a perplexing little puzzle, and an instructive inquiry, to determine in just how many different ways those letters may be distributed under that condition — no letter to appear twice on a line. A mere reversal or reflection will not count as a different way. Thus, the example may be turned round so that each side is successively at the top, and these four ways reflected in a mirror, but these are only eight presentations of a single solution. The puzzle is to avoid counting the same arrangement more than once. There are fewer solutions than the reader will probably suspect.



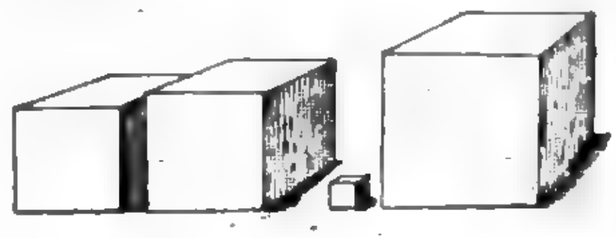
598.—MISSING WORDS.

"You'd like a puzzle, gentle maid?
A simple one I'll give," said he.
"If one and a half three halfpence cost,
What will a dozen . . . . . be?"
She worked away with . . . . . air,
An answer wrong soon to produce.
"I thought 'twas . . . . . that you said,"
She gave as her absurd excuse.
As if the larger fruit that she selected
Could have, in any way, the price affected!

Each of the three missing words contains the same six letters.

599.—THE FOUR CUBES.

A stonemason has four cubic blocks of stone, all of different sizes, but the cubic contents of two of them exactly equals the cubic contents of the other pair. Now, it is known that the smallest cube measures exactly 5 inches on every side. Can you give dimensions for the other cubes in exact inches—no fractions? The cubes in the illustration are purposely not drawn in correct proportions.



600.—BEHEADINGS AND CURTAILINGS.

1. Behead an animal and leave an animal. (Fox, Ox.)
2. Behead a musical instrument and leave a musical instrument.
3. Behead a margin and leave a margin.
4. Behead a vessel and leave a vessel.
5. Behead to liquefy and leave to liquefy.
6. Behead to ascend and leave to ascend.
7. Behead to move slowly and leave to move slowly.
8. Behead a woman's name and leave a woman's name; again, and leave a man's name.
9. Curtail a lamentation and leave to lament.
10. Curtail a protection and leave a protection.
11. Curtail to blemish and leave to blemish.
12. Curtail to conceal and leave concealed.
13. Curtail to disclose and leave to disclose.

601.—DISTRIBUTING NUTS.

Aunt Martha bought some nuts. She gave Tommy one nut and a quarter of the remainder; Bessie then received one nut and a quarter of what were left; Bob, one nut and a quarter of the remainder; and finally Jessie received one nut and a quarter of the remainder. It was then noticed that the boys had received exactly 100 nuts more than the girls. How many nuts had Aunt Martha retained for her own use?

SOLUTIONS TO LAST MONTH'S PUZZLES.

593.—A CURIOUS END-GAME.

Play as follows: 1. K—B 5, R—B 5 ch.; 2. K—Kt 5, R checks; 3. K takes R, Any move; 4. Kt—Kt 6 mate. Or 1. . . . , R—K 4 ch.; 2. K—B 6, R checks; 3. K takes R, Any move; 4. Kt—Kt 6 mate. It will be seen that the king cunningly avoids taking the rook until he can do so on a white square and thus avoid being checked by the bishop, when the other R would come into play, entirely defeating the mate in four moves.

594.—THE FIRST "BOOMERANG" PUZZLE.

When you are given the remainder after dividing by 3 multiply it by 70, the remainder by 5 multiply by 21, and the remainder by 7 multiply by 15. Add these results together and they will give you either the number thought of or that number increased by some multiple of 105. Thus, if the number thought of was 79, then the remainder 1 multiplied by 70, the remainder 4 multiplied by 21, and the remainder 2 multiplied by 15, added together make 184. Deduct 105 and you get 79—the number thought of.

595.—THE FIVE CARDS.

The number is either 3 9 1 5 7 or 5 7 1 3 9. In either case the product of the two pairs 39 and 57, minus 1, results in 2 2 2 2.

596.—A CHARADE.

The word is MA—HOG—ANY.

In No. 587, for "The monkey's mother *was* twice as old," read "*is* twice as old." In No. 585, if we allow fractions *less* than a minute point, there is also the solution five seconds (one-twelfth of a minute) past XII o'clock.

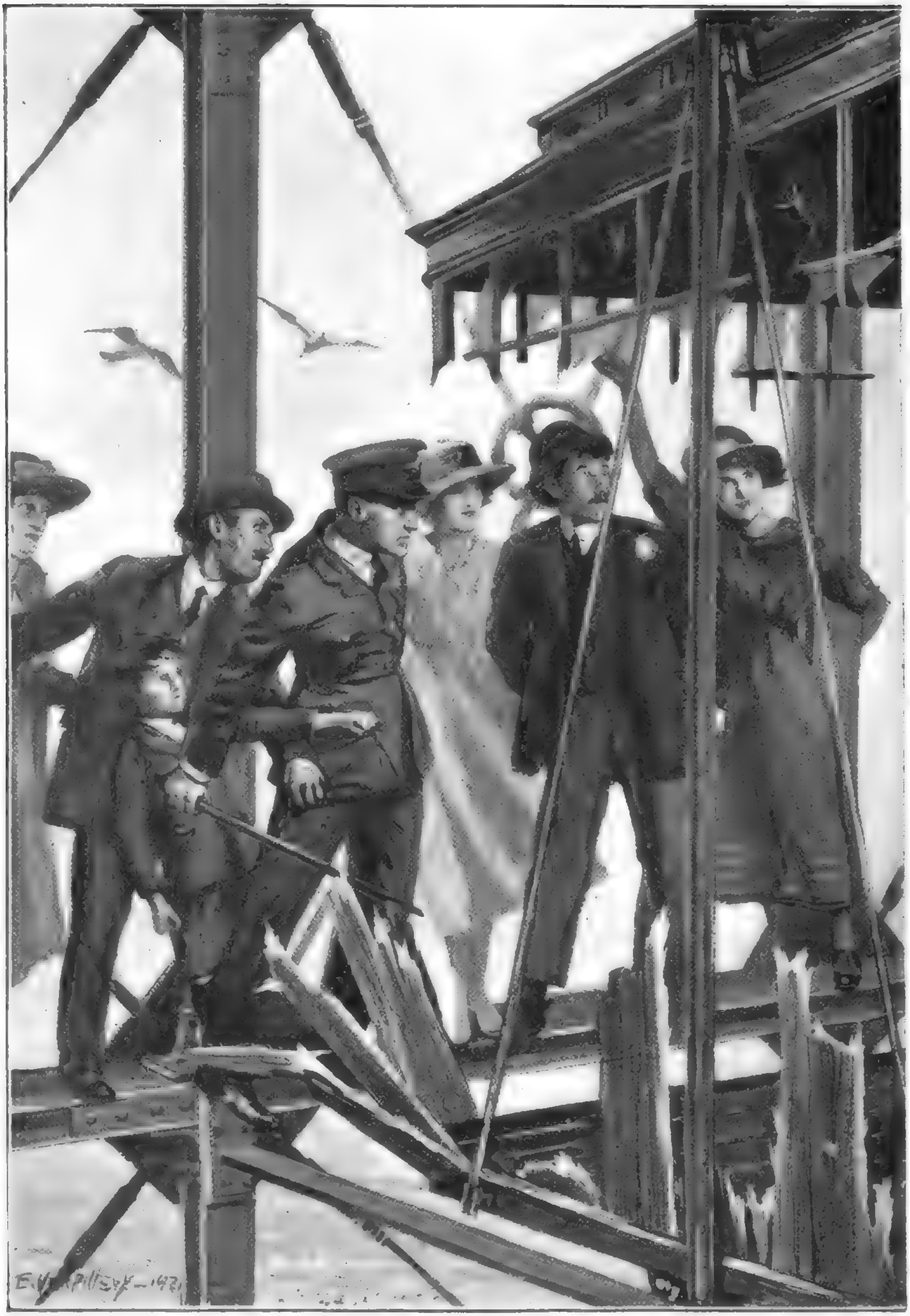
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"Get across! Quick! Quick! All of you. I'll hold this devil off!" He had seized him to

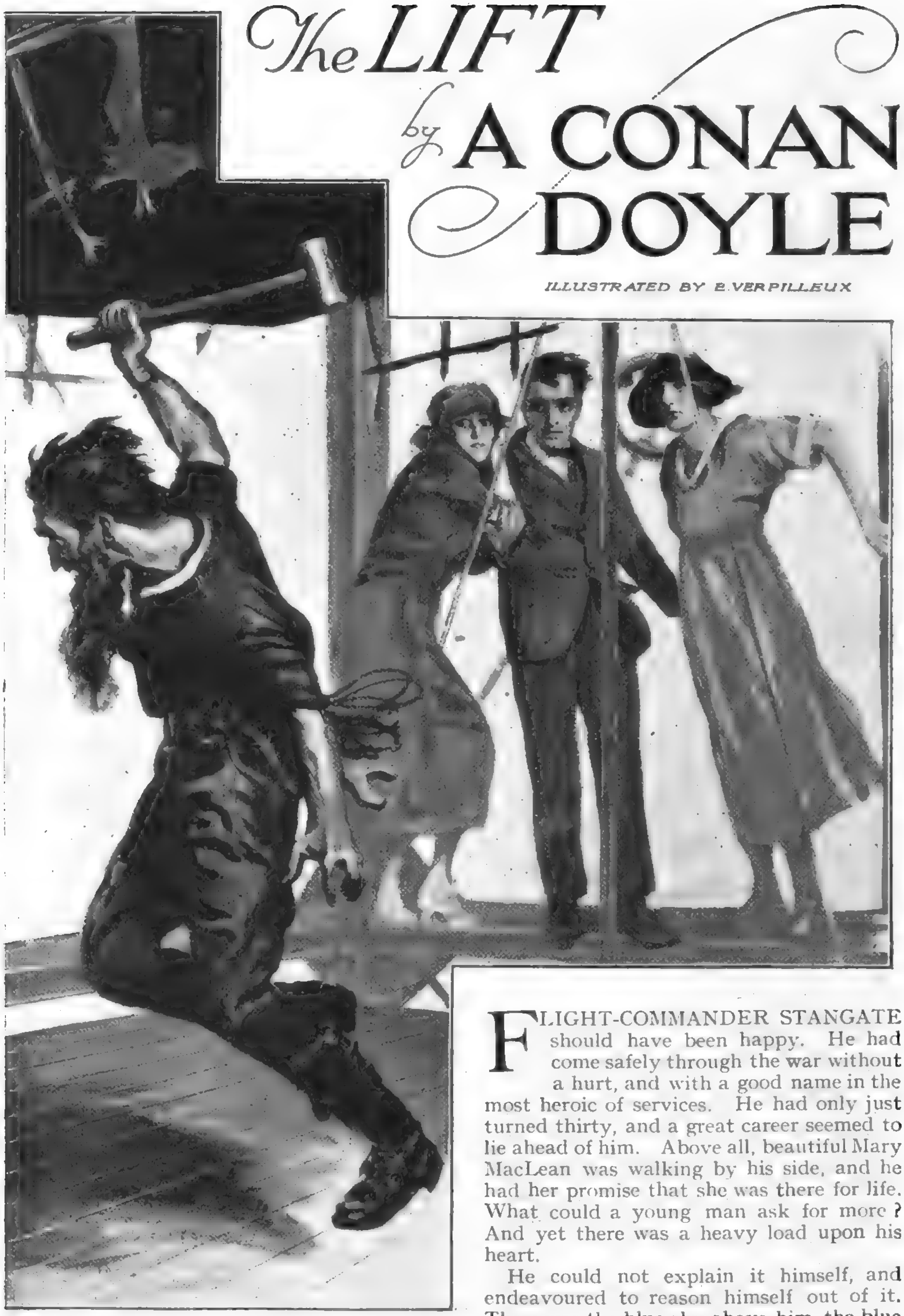
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The LIFT

by A CONAN DOYLE

ILLUSTRATED BY E. VERPILLEUX



a stout stick and faced the madman, daring spring across.

FLIGHT-COMMANDER STANGATE should have been happy. He had come safely through the war without a hurt, and with a good name in the most heroic of services. He had only just turned thirty, and a great career seemed to lie ahead of him. Above all, beautiful Mary MacLean was walking by his side, and he had her promise that she was there for life. What could a young man ask for more? And yet there was a heavy load upon his heart.

He could not explain it himself, and endeavoured to reason himself out of it. There was the blue sky above him, the blue sea in front, the beautiful gardens with their throngs of happy pleasure-seekers around.

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Above all, there was that sweet face turned upon him with questioning concern. Why could he not raise himself to so joyful an environment? He made effort after effort, but they were not convincing enough to deceive the quick instinct of a loving woman.

"What is it, Tom?" she asked, anxiously. "I can see that something is clouding you. Do tell me if I can help you in any way."

He laughed in shamefaced fashion.

"It is such a sin to spoil our little outing," he said. "I could kick myself round these gardens when I think of it. Don't worry, my darling, for I know the cloud will roll off. I suppose I am a creature of nerves, though I should have got past that by now. The Flying Service is supposed either to break you or to warrant you for life."

"It is nothing definite, then?"

"No, it is nothing definite. That's the worst of it. You could fight it more easily if it was. It's just a dead, heavy depression here in my chest and across my forehead. But do forgive me, dear girl! What a brute I am to shadow you like this."

"But I love to share even the smallest trouble."

"Well, it's gone—vamoosed—vanished. We will talk about it no more."

She gave him a swift, penetrating glance.

"No, no, Tom; your brow shows, as well as feels. Tell me, dear, have you often felt like this? You really look very ill. Sit here, dear, in the shade and tell me of it."

THEY sat together in the shadow of the great latticed Tower which reared itself six hundred feet high beside them.

"I have an absurd faculty," said he: "I don't know that I have ever mentioned it to anyone before. But when imminent danger is threatening me I get these strange forebodings. Of course it is absurd to-day in these peaceful surroundings. It only shows how queerly these things work. But it is the first time that it has deceived me."

"When had you it before?"

"When I was a lad it seized me one morning. I was nearly drowned that afternoon. I had it when the burglar came to Morton Hall and I got a bullet through my coat. Then twice in the war when I was overmatched and escaped by a miracle, I had this strange feeling before ever I climbed into my machine. Then it lifts quite suddenly, like a mist in the sunshine. Why, it is lifting now. Look at me! Can't you see that it is so?"

She could indeed. He had turned in a minute from a haggard man to a laughing boy. She found herself laughing in sympathy. A rush of high spirits and energy had swept away his strange foreboding and filled his whole soul with the vivid, dancing joy of youth.

"Thank goodness!" he cried. "I think it is your dear eyes that have done it. I could not stand that wistful look in them. What a silly, foolish nightmare it all has been! There's an end for ever in my belief in presentiments. Now, dear girl, we have just time for one good turn before luncheon. After that the gardens get so crowded that it is hopeless to do anything. Shall we have a side show, or the great wheel, or the flying boat, or what?"

"What about the Tower?" she asked, glancing upwards. "Surely that glorious air and the view from the top would drive the last wisps of cloud out of your mind."

He looked at his watch.

"Well, it's past twelve, but I suppose we could do it all in an hour. But it doesn't seem to be working. What about it, conductor?"

The man shook his head and pointed to a little knot of people who were assembled at the entrance.

"They've all been waiting, sir. It's hung up, but the gear is being overhauled, and I expect the signal every minute. If you join the others I promise it won't be long."

They had hardly reached the group when the steel face of the lift rolled aside—a sign that there was hope in the future. The motley crowd drifted through the opening and waited expectantly upon the wooden platform. They were not numerous, for the gardens are not crowded until the afternoon, but they were fair samples of the kindly, good-humoured North-country folk who take their annual holiday at Northam. Their faces were all upturned now, and they were watching with keen interest a man who was descending the steel framework. It seemed a dangerous, precarious business, but he came as swiftly as an ordinary mortal upon a staircase.

"My word!" said the conductor, glancing up. "Jim has got a move on this morning."

"Who is he?" asked Commander Stangate.

"That's Jim Barnes, sir, the best workman that ever went on a scaffold. He fair lives up there. Every bolt and rivet are under his care. He's a wonder, is Jim."

"But don't argue religion with him," said one of the group

The attendant laughed.

"Ah, you know him, then," said he. "No, don't argue religion with him."

"Why not?" asked the officer.

"Well, he takes it very hard, he does. He's the shining light of his sect."

"It ain't hard to be that," said the knowing one. "I've heard there are only six folk in the fold. He's one of those who

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picture heaven as the exact size of their own back street conventicle, and everyone else left outside it."

"Better not tell him so while he's got that hammer in his hand," said the conductor, in a hurried whisper. "Hallo, Jim, how goes it this morning?"

The man slid swiftly down the last thirty feet, and then balanced himself on a crossbar while he looked at the little group in the lift. As he stood there, clad in a leather suit, with his pliers and other tools dangling from his brown belt, he was a figure to please the eye of an artist. The man was very tall and gaunt, with great straggling limbs and every appearance of giant strength. His face was a remarkable one, noble and yet sinister, with dark eyes and hair, a prominent hooked nose, and a beard which flowed over his chest. He steadied himself with one knotted hand, while the other held a steel hammer dangling by his knee.



"When imminent danger is threatening me," he said, "I get strange forebodings"

"It's all ready aloft," said he. "I'll go up with you if I may." He sprang down from his perch and joined the others in the lift.

"I suppose you are always watching it?" said the young lady.

"That is what I am engaged for, miss. From morning to night, and often from night to morning, I am up there. There are times when I feel as if I were not a man at all but a fowl of the air. They fly round me, the creatures, as I lie out on the girders, and they cry to me until I find myself crying back to the poor soulless things."

"It's a great charge," said the Commander, glancing up at the wonderful tracery of steel outlined against the deep blue sky.

"Aye, sir, and there is not a nut nor a screw that is not in my keeping. Here's my hammer to ring them true and my spanner to wrench them tight. As the Lord over the earth, so am I—even I—over the Tower, with power of life and power of death, aye of death and of life."

The hydraulic machinery had begun to work and the lift very slowly ascended. As it mounted, the glorious panorama of the coast and bay gradually unfolded itself. So engrossing was the view that the passengers hardly noticed it when the platform

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stopped abruptly between stages at the five hundred foot level. Barnes, the workman, muttered that something must be amiss, and springing like a cat across the gap which separated them from the trellis-work of metal he clambered out of sight. The motley little party, suspended in mid-air, lost something of their British shyness under such unwonted conditions and began to compare notes with each other. One couple, who addressed each other as Dolly and Billy, announced to the company that they were the particular stars of the Hippodrome bill, and kept their neighbours tittering with their rather obvious wit. A buxom mother, her precocious son, and two married couples on a holiday formed an appreciative audience.

"You'd like to be a sailor, would you?" said Billy the comedian, in answer to some remark of the boy. "Look 'ere, my nipper, you'll end up as a bloomin' corpse if you ain't careful. See 'im standin' at the edge. At this hour of the mornin' I can't bear to watch it."

'What's the hour got to do with it?" asked a stout commercial traveller.

"My nerves are worth nothin' before midday. Why, lookin' down there, and seein' those folk like dots, puts me all in a twitter. My family is all alike in the mornin'."

"I expect," said Dolly, a high-coloured young woman, "that's because they're all alike the evening before."

There was a general laugh, which was led by the comedian.

"You got it across that time, Dolly. It's K.O. for Battlin' Billy—still senseless when last heard of. If my family is laughed at I'll leave the room."

"It's about time we did," said the commercial traveller, who was a red-faced, choleric person. 'It's a disgrace the way they hold us up. I'll write to the company."

'Where's the bell-push?" said Billy. "I'm goin' to ring."

"What for—the waiter?" asked the lady.

"For the conductor, the chauffeur, whoever it is that drives the old bus up and down. Have they run out of petrol, or broke the mainspring, or what?"

"We have a fine view, anyhow," said the Commander.

"Well, I've had that," remarked Billy. "I'm done with it, and I'm for gettin' on."

"I'm getting nervous," cried the stout mother. "I do hope there is nothing wrong with the lift."



As he stood there, clad in a leather suit, with his pliers and other tools dangling from his brown belt, he was a figure to please the eye of an artist.

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" I say, hold on to the slack of my coat, Dolly. I'm going to look over and chance it. Oh, Lord, it makes me sick and giddy! There's a horse down under, and it ain't bigger than a mouse. I don't see anyone lookin' after us. Where's old Isaiah the prophet who came up with us ? "

" He shinned out of it mighty quick when he thought trouble was coming."

" Look here," said Dolly, looking very perturbed, " this is a nice thing, I don't think. Here we are five hundred foot up, and stuck for the day as like as not. I'm due for the *matinée* at the Hippodrome. I'm sorry for the company if they don't get me down in time for that. I'm billed all over the town for a new song."

" A new one ! What's that, Dolly ? "

" A real pot o' ginger, I tell you. It's called ' On the Road to Ascot.' I've got a hat four foot across to sing it in."

" Come on, Dolly, let's have a rehearsal while we wait."

" No, no ; the young lady here wouldn't understand."

" I'd be very glad to hear it," cried Mary MacLean. " Please don't let me prevent you."

" The words were written to the hat. I couldn't sing the verses without the hat. But there's a nailin' good chorus to it :—

' If you want a little mascot
When you're on the way to Ascot,
Try the lady with the cartwheel hat.' "

She had a tuneful voice and a sense of rhythm which set everyone nodding. " Try it now all together," she cried ; and the strange little haphazard company sang it with all their lungs.

" I say," said Billy, " that ought to wake somebody up. What ? Let's try a shout all together."

It was a fine effort, but there was no response. It was clear that the management down below was quite ignorant or impotent. No sound came back to them.

THE passengers became alarmed. The commercial traveller was rather less rubicund. Billy still tried to joke, but his efforts were not well received. The officer in his blue uniform at once took his place as rightful leader in a crisis. They all looked to him and appealed to him.

" What would you advise, sir ? You don't think there's any danger of it coming down, do you ? "

" Not the least. But it's awkward to be stuck here all the same. I think I could jump across on to that girder. Then perhaps I could see what is wrong."

" No, no, Tom ; for goodness' sake, don't leave us ! "

" Some people have a nerve," said Billy. " Fancy jumping across a five-hundred-foot drop ! "

" I dare say the gentleman did worse things in the war."

" Well, I wouldn't do it myself—not if they starred me in the bills. It's all very well for old Isaiah. It's his job, and I wouldn't do him out of it."

Three sides of the lift were shut in with wooden partitions, pierced with windows for the view. The fourth side, facing the sea, was clear. Stangate leaned over as far as he could and looked upwards. As he did so there came from above him a peculiar sonorous metallic twang, as if a mighty harp-string had been struck. Some distance up—a hundred feet, perhaps—he could see a long brown corded arm, which was working furiously among the wire cordage above. The form was beyond his view, but he was fascinated by this bare sinewy arm which tugged and pulled and sagged and stabbed.

" It's all right," he said, and a general sigh of relief broke from his strange comrades at his words. " There is someone above us setting things right."

" It's old Isaiah," said Billy, stretching his neck round the corner. " I can't see him, but it's his arm for a dollar. What's he got in his hand ? Looks like a screwdriver or something. No, by George, it's a file."

As he spoke there came another sonorous twang from above. There was a troubled frown upon the officer's brow.

" I say, dash it all, that's the very sound our steel hawser made when it parted, strand by strand, at Dixmude. What the deuce is the fellow about ? Heh, there ! what are you trying to do ? "

The man had ceased his work and was now slowly descending the iron trellis.

" All right, he's coming," said Stangate to his startled companions. " It's all right, Mary. Don't be frightened, any of you. It's absurd to suppose he would really weaken the cord that holds us."

A pair of high boots appeared from above. Then came the leathern breeches, the belt with its dangling tools, the muscular form, and, finally, the fierce, swarthy, eagle face of the workman. His coat was off and his shirt open, showing the hairy chest. As he appeared there came another sharp snapping vibration from above. The man made his way down in leisurely fashion, and then, balancing himself upon the cross-girder and leaning against the side piece, he stood with folded arms, looking from under his heavy black brows at the huddled passengers upon the platform.

" Hallo ! " said Stangate. " What's the matter ? "

The man stood impassive and silent, with

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something indescribably menacing in his fixed, unwinking stare.

The flying officer grew angry.

"Hallo! Are you deaf?" he cried. "How long do you mean to leave us stuck here?"

The man stood silent. There was something devilish in his appearance.

"I'll complain of you, my lad," said Billy, in a quivering voice. "This won't stop here, I can promise you."

"Look here!" cried the officer. "We have ladies here and you are alarming them. Why are we stuck here? Has the machinery gone wrong?"

"You are here," said the man, "because I have put a wedge against the hawser above you."

"You fouled the line! How dared you do such a thing! What right have you to frighten the women and put us all to this inconvenience? Take that wedge out this instant, or it will be the worse for you."

The man was silent.

"Do you hear what I say? Why the devil don't you answer? Is this a joke or what? We've had about enough of it, I tell you."

Mary MacLean had gripped her lover by the arm in an agony of sudden panic.

"Oh, Tom!" she cried. "Look at his eyes—look at his horrible eyes! The man is a maniac."

The workman stirred suddenly into sinister life. His dark face broke into writhing lines of passion, and his fierce eyes glowed like embers, while he shook one long arm in the air.

"Behold," he cried, "those who are mad to the children of this world are in very truth the Lord's anointed and the dwellers in the inner temple. Lo, I am one who is prepared to testify even to the uttermost, for of a verity the day has now come when



"Oh, Tom!" cried Mary. "Look at his eyes—

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the humble will be exalted and the wicked will be cut off in their sins!"

"Mother! Mother!" cried the little boy, in terror.

"There, there! It's all right, Jack," said the buxom woman; and then, in a burst of womanly wrath, "What d'you want to make the child cry for? You're a pretty man, you are!"

"Better he should cry now than in the outer darkness. Let him seek safety while there is yet time."

The officer measured the gap with a practised eye. It was a good eight feet across, and the fellow could push him over before he could steady himself. It would be a desperate thing to attempt. He tried soothing words once more.

"See here, my lad, you've carried this joke too far. Why should you wish to injure us? Just shin up and get that wedge out, and we will agree to say no more about it."

Another rending snap came from above.

"By George, the hawser is going!" cried Stangate. "Here! Stand aside! I'm coming over to see to it."

The workman had plucked the hammer from his belt, and waved it furiously in the air.

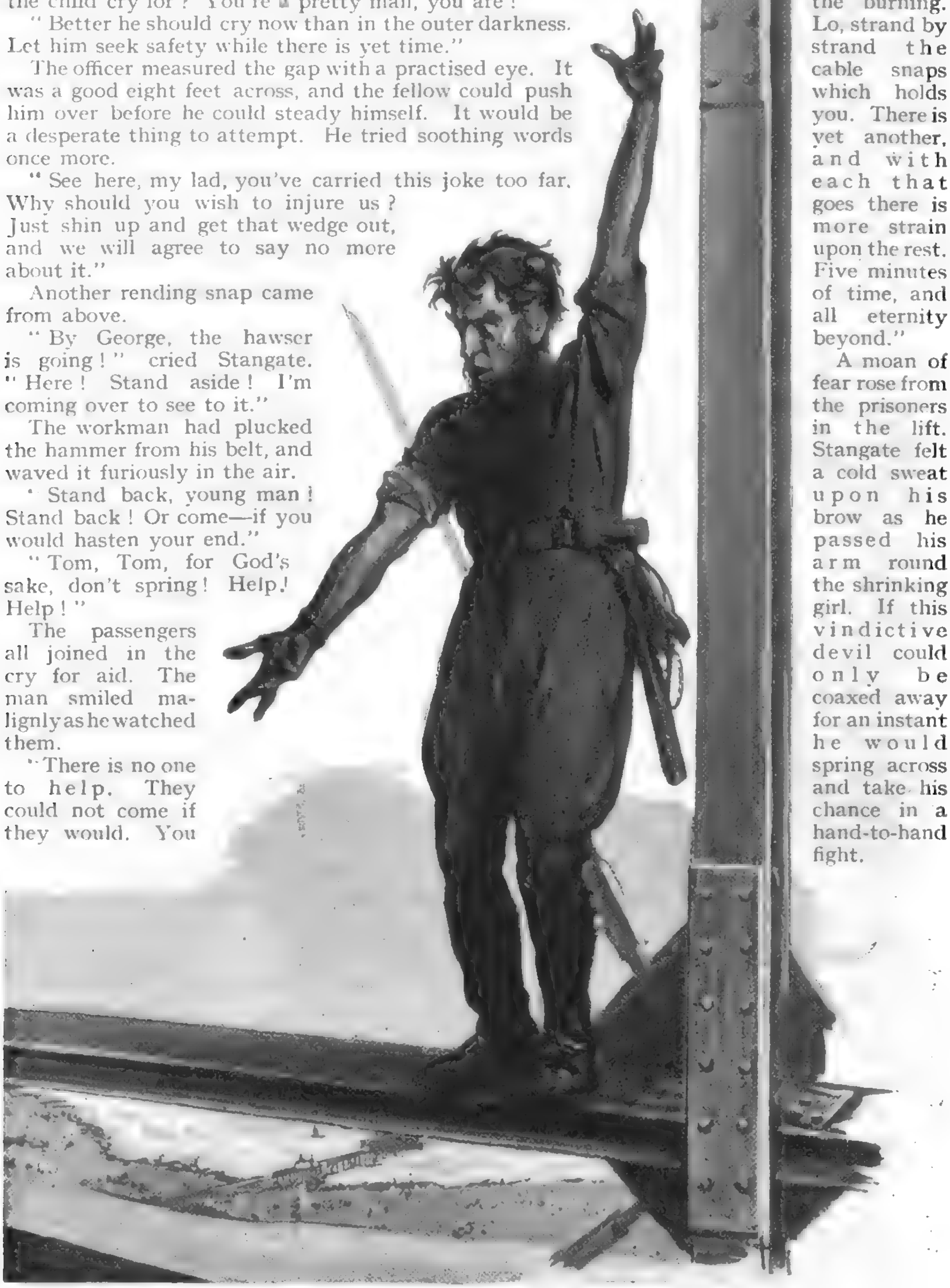
"Stand back, young man! Stand back! Or come—if you would hasten your end."

"Tom, Tom, for God's sake, don't spring! Help! Help!"

The passengers all joined in the cry for aid. The man smiled malignly as he watched them.

"There is no one to help. They could not come if they would. You would be wiser to turn to your own souls that ye be not cast to the burning. Lo, strand by strand the cable snaps which holds you. There is yet another, and with each that goes there is more strain upon the rest. Five minutes of time, and all eternity beyond."

A moan of fear rose from the prisoners in the lift. Stangate felt a cold sweat upon his brow as he passed his arm round the shrinking girl. If this vindictive devil could only be coaxed away for an instant he would spring across and take his chance in a hand-to-hand fight.



look at his horrible eyes! The man is a maniac."

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"Look here, my friend! We give you best!" he cried. "We can do nothing. Go up and cut the cable if you wish. Go on—do it now, and get it over!"

"That you may come across unharmed. Having set my hand to the work, I will not draw back from it."

Fury seized the young officer.

"You devil!" he cried. "What do you stand there grinning for? I'll give you something to grin about. Give me a stick, one of you."

The man waved his hammer.

"Come, then! Come to judgment!" he howled.

"He'll murder you, Tom! Oh, for God's sake, don't! If we must die, let us die together."

"I wouldn't try it, sir," cried Billy. "He'll strike you down before you get a footing. Hold up, Dolly, my dear! Faintin' won't 'elp us. You speak to him, miss. Maybe he'll listen to you."

"Why should you wish to hurt us?" said Mary. "What have we ever done to you? Surely you will be sorry afterwards if we are injured. Now do be kind and reasonable and help us to get back to the ground."

For a moment there may have been some softening in the man's fierce eyes as he looked at the sweet face which was upturned to him. Then his features set once more into their grim lines of malice.

"My hand is set to the work, woman. It is not for the servant to look back from his task."

"But why should this be your task?"

"Because there is a voice within me which tells me so. In the night-time I have heard it, and in the day-time too, when I have lain out alone upon the girders and seen the wicked dotting the streets beneath me, each busy on his own evil intent. 'John Barnes, John Barnes,' said the voice. 'You are here that you may give a sign to a sinful generation—such a sign as shall show them that the Lord liveth and that there is a judgment upon sin.' Who am I that I should disobey the voice of the Lord?"

"The voice of the devil," said Stangate. "What is the sin of this lady, or of these others, that you should seek their lives?"

"You are as the others, neither better nor worse. All day they pass me, load by load, with foolish cries and empty songs and vain babble of voices. Their thoughts are set upon the things of the flesh. Too long have I stood aside and watched and refused to testify. But now the day of wrath is come and the sacrifice is ready. Think not that a woman's tongue can turn me from my task."

"It is useless!" Mary cried. "Useless! I read death in his eyes."

Another cord had snapped.

"Repent! Repent!" cried the madman. "One more, and it is over!"

Commander Stangate felt as if it were all some extraordinary dream—some monstrous nightmare. Could it be possible that he, after all his escapes of death in warfare, was now, in the heart of peaceful England, at the mercy of a homicidal lunatic, and that his dear girl, the one being whom he would shield from the very shadow of danger, was helpless before this horrible man? All his energy and manhood rose up in him for one last effort.

"Here, we won't be killed like sheep in the shambles!" he cried, throwing himself against the wooden wall of the lift and kicking with all his force. "Come on, boys! Kick it! Beat it! It's only match-boarding, and it is giving. Smash it down! Well done! Once more all together! There she goes! Now for the side! Out with it! Splendid!"

First the back and then the side of the little compartment had been knocked out, and the splinters dropped down into the abyss. Barnes danced upon his girder, his hammer in the sir.

"Strive not!" he shrieked. "It avails not. The day is surely come!"

"It's not two feet from the side girder," cried the officer. "Get across! Quick! Quick! All of you. I'll hold this devil off!" He had seized a stout stick from the commercial traveller and faced the madman, daring him to spring across.

"Your turn now, my friend!" he hissed. "Come on, hammer and all! I'm ready for you."

Above him he heard another snap, and the frail platform began to rock. Glancing over his shoulder, he saw that his companions were all safe upon the side girder. A strange line of terrified castaways they appeared as they clung in an ungainly row to the trellis-work of steel. But their feet were on the iron support. With two quick steps and a spring he was at their side. At the same instant the murderer, hammer in hand, jumped the gap. They had one vision of him there—a vision which will haunt their dreams—the convulsed face, the blazing eyes, the wind-tossed raven locks. For a moment he balanced himself upon the swaying platform. The next, with a rending crash, he and it were gone. There was a long silence and then, far down, the thud and clatter of a mighty fall.

WITH white faces, the forlorn group clung to the cold steel bars and gazed down into the terrible abyss. It was the Commander who broke the silence.

"They'll send for us now. It's all safe," he cried, wiping his brow. "But, by Jove, it was a close call!"

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The GREAT SERMON HANDICAP

by

P. G. WODEHOUSE

ILLUSTRATED BY A. WALLIS MILLS

YOU can always rely on Jeeves. Just as I was wiping the brow and gasping like a stranded goldfish, in he drifted, merry and bright, with the good old tissue-restorers on a tray.

"Jeeves," I said, "it's beastly hot."

"The weather *is* oppressive, sir."

"Not all the soda, Jeeves."

"No, sir."

"London in August," I said, quaffing deeply of the flowing b., "rather tends to give me the pip. All my pals are away, most of the theatres are shut, and they're taking up Piccadilly in large spadefuls. The world is empty and smells of burning asphalt. Shift-ho, I think, Jeeves, what?"

"Just as you say, sir. There is a letter on the tray, sir."

"By Jove, Jeeves, that was practically poetry. Rhymed, did you notice?" I opened the letter. "I say, this is rather extraordinary."

"Sir?"

"You know Twing Hall?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, Mr. Little is there."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Absolutely in the flesh. He's had to take another of those tutoring jobs."

I don't know if you remember, but immediately after that fearful mix-up at Goodwood, young Bingo Little, a broken man, had touched me for a tenner and whizzed silently off into the unknown. I had been all over the place ever since, asking mutual friends if they had heard anything of him, but nobody had. And all the time he had been at Twing Hall. Rummy. And I'll tell you why it was rummy. Twing Hall belongs to old Lord Wickhammersley, a great pal of my guv'nor's when he was alive, and I have a standing invitation to pop down there when I like. I generally put in a week or two some time in the summer, and I was thinking of going there before I read the letter.

"And, what's more, Jeeves, my cousin Claude, and my cousin Eustace—you remember them?"

"Very vividly, sir."

"Well, they're down there, too, reading for some exam. or other with the vicar. I used to read with him myself at one time. He's known far and wide as a pretty hot coach for those of fairly feeble intellect. Well, when I tell you he got *me* through Smalls, you'll gather that he's a bit of a hummer. I call this most extraordinary."

I read the letter again. It was from Eustace. Claude and Eustace are twins,

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and more or less generally admitted to be the curse of the human race.

"The Vicarage,
"Twing, Glos.

"DEAR BERTIE,—Do you want to make a bit of money? I hear you had a bad Goodwood, so you probably do. Well, come down here quick and get in on the biggest sporting event of the season. I'll explain when I see you, but you can take it from me it's all right.

"Claude and I are with a reading-party at old Heppenstall's. There are nine of us, not counting your pal Bingo Little, who is tutoring the kid up at the Hall.

"Don't miss this golden opportunity, which may never occur again. Come and join us.

"Yours,
"EUSTACE."

I handed this to Jeeves. He studied it thoughtfully.

"What do you make of it? A rummy communication, what?"

"Very high-spirited young gentlemen, sir, Mr. Claude and Mr. Eustace. Up to some game, I should be disposed to imagine."

"Yes. But what game, do you think?"

"It is impossible to say, sir. Did you observe that the letter continues over the page?"

"Eh, what?" I grabbed the thing. This was what was on the other side of the last page:—

SERMON HANDICAP
RUNNERS AND BETTING
PROBABLE STARTERS.

Rev. Joseph Tucker (Badgwick), scratch.
Rev. Leonard Starkie (Stapleton), scratch.
Rev. Alexander Jones (Upper Bingley), receives three minutes.
Rev. W. Dix (Little Clickton-in-the-Wold), receives five minutes.
Rev. Francis Heppenstall (Twing), receives eight minutes.
Rev. Cuthbert Dibble (Boustead Parva), receives nine minutes.
Rev. Orlo Hough (Boustead Magna), receives nine minutes.
Rev. J. J. Roberts (Fale-by-the-Water), receives ten minutes.
Rev. G. Hayward (Lower Bingley), receives twelve minutes.
Rev. James Bates (Gandle-by-the-Hill), receives fifteen minutes.

(*The above have arrived.*)

PRICES.—5-2, Tucker, Starkie; 3-1, Jones; 9-2, Dix; 6-1, Heppenstall, Dibble, Hough; 100-8 any other.

It baffled me.

"Do you understand it, Jeeves?"

"No, sir."

"Well, I think we ought to have a look into it, anyway, what?"

"Undoubtedly, sir."

"Right-o, then. Pack our spare dickey and a toothbrush in a neat brown-paper parcel, send a wire to Lord Wickhammersley to say we're coming, and buy two tickets on the five-ten at Paddington to-morrow."

THE five-ten was late as usual, and everybody was dressing for dinner when I arrived at the Hall. It was only by getting into my evening things in record time and taking the stairs to the dining-room in a couple of bounds that I managed to dead-heat with the soup. I slid into the vacant chair, and found that I was sitting next to old Wickhammersley's youngest daughter, Cynthia.

"Oh, hallo, old thing," I said.

Great pals we've always been. In fact, there was a time when I had an idea I was in love with Cynthia. However, it blew over. A dashed pretty and lively and attractive girl, mind you, but full of ideals and all that. I may be wronging her, but I have an idea that she's the sort of girl who would want a fellow to carve out a career and what not. I know I've heard her speak favourably of Napoleon. So what with one thing and another the jolly old frenzy sort of petered out, and now we're just pals. I think she's a topper, and she thinks me next door to a looney, so everything's nice and matey.

"Well, Bertie, so you've arrived?"

"Oh, yes, I've arrived. Yes, here I am. I say, I seem to have plunged into the middle of quite a young dinner-party. Who are all these coves?"

"Oh, just people from round about. You know most of them. You remember Colonel Willis, and the Spencers——"

"Of course, yes. And there's old Heppenstall. Who's the other clergyman next to Mrs. Spencer?"

"Mr. Hayward, from Lower Bingley."

"What an amazing lot of clergymen there are round here. Why, there's another, next to Mrs. Willis."

"That's Mr. Bates, Mr. Heppenstall's nephew. He's an assistant-master at Eton. He's down here during the summer holidays, acting as locum tenens for Mr. Spettigue, the rector of Gandle-by-the-Hill."

"I thought I knew his face. He was in his fourth year at Oxford when I was a fresher. Rather a blood. Got his rowing-blue and all that." I took another look round the table, and spotted young Bingo. "Ah, there he is," I said. "There's the old egg."

"There's who?"

"Young Bingo Little. Great pal of mine. He's tutoring your brother, you know."

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"Good gracious! Is he a friend of yours?"

"Rather! Known him all my life."

"Then tell me, Bertie, is he at all weak in the head?"

"Tell me, Bertie, is Mr. Little at all weak in the head? I don't mean simply because he's a friend of yours."

"Weak in the head?"

"I don't mean simply because he's a friend of yours. But he's so strange in his manner."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, he keeps looking at me so oddly."

"Oddly? How? Give an imitation."

"I can't in front of all these people."

"Yes, you can. I'll hold my napkin up."

"All right, then. Quick. There!"

Considering that she had only about a second and a half to do it in, I must say it was a jolly fine exhibition. She opened her mouth and eyes pretty wide and let her jaw drop sideways, and managed to look so like a dyspeptic calf that I recognized the symptoms immediately.

"Oh, that's all right," I said. "No need to be alarmed. He's simply in love with you."

"In love with me? Don't be absurd."

"My dear old thing, you don't know young Bingo. He can fall in love with *anybody*."

"Thank you!"

"Oh, I didn't mean it that way, you know. I don't wonder at his taking to you. Why, I was in love with you myself once."

"Once? Ah! And all that remains now are the cold ashes? This isn't one of your tactful evenings, Bertie."

"Well, my dear sweet thing, dash it all, considering that you gave me the bird and nearly laughed yourself into a permanent state of hiccoughs when I asked you——"

"Oh, I'm not reproaching you. No

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doubt there were faults on both sides. He's very good-looking, isn't he ? "

" Good-looking ? Bingo ? Bingo good-looking ? No, I say, come now, really ! "

" I mean, compared with some people," said Cynthia.

Some time after this, Lady Wickhammersley gave the signal for the females of the species to leg it, and they duly stampeded. I didn't get a chance of talking to young Bingo when they'd gone, and later, in the drawing-room, he didn't show up. I found him eventually in his room, lying on the bed with his feet on the rail, smoking a toofah. There was a notebook on the counterpane beside him.

' Hallo, old scream," I said.

" Hallo, Bertie," he replied, in what seemed to me rather a moody, distrait sort of manner.

" Rummy finding you down here. I take it your uncle cut off your allowance after that Goodwood binge and you had to take this tutoring job to keep the wolf from the door ? "

" Correct," said young Bingo, tersely.

" Well, you might have let your pals know where you were."

He frowned darkly.

" I didn't want them to know where I was. I wanted to creep away and hide myself. I've been through a bad time, Bertie, these last weeks. The sun ceased to shine——"

" That's curious. We've had gorgeous weather in London."

" The birds ceased to sing——"

" What birds ? "

" What the devil does it matter what birds ? " said young Bingo, with some asperity. " Any birds. The birds round about here. You don't expect me to specify them by their pet names, do you ? I tell you, Bertie, it hit me hard at first, very hard."

" What hit you ? " I simply couldn't follow the blighter.

" Charlotte's calculated callousness."

" Oh, ah ! " I've seen poor old Bingo through so many unsuccessful love-affairs that I'd almost forgotten there was a girl mixed up with that Goodwood business. Of course ! Charlotte Corday Rowbotham. And she had given him the raspberry, I remembered now, and gone off with Comrade Butt.

" I went through torments. Recently, however, I've—er—bucked up a bit. Tell me, Bertie, what are you doing down here ? I didn't know you knew these people."

" Me ? Why, I've known them since I was a kid "

Young Bingo put his feet down with a thud.

" Do you mean to say you've known Lady Cynthia all that time ? "

" Rather ! She can't have been seven when I met her first."

" Good Lord ! " said young Bingo. He looked at me for the first time as though I amounted to something, and swallowed a mouthful of smoke the wrong way. " I love that girl, Bertie," he went on, when he'd finished coughing.

" Yes ? Nice girl, of course."

He eyed me with pretty deep loathing.

" Don't speak of her in that horrible casual way. She's an angel. An angel ! Was she talking about me at all at dinner, Bertie ? "

" Oh, yes."

" What did she say ? "

" I remember one thing. She said she thought you good-looking."

Young Bingo closed his eyes in a sort of ecstasy. Then he picked up the notebook.

" Pop off now, old man, there's a good chap," he said, in a hushed, far-away voice. " I've got a bit of writing to do."

" Writing ? "

" Poetry, if you must know. I wish the dickens," said young Bingo, not without some bitterness, " she had been christened something except Cynthia. There isn't a dam' word in the language it rhymes with. Ye gods, how I could have spread myself if she had only been called Jane ! "

BRIGHT and early next morning, as I lay in bed blinking at the sunlight on the dressing-table and wondering when Jeeves was going to show up with the cup of tea, a heavy weight descended on my toes, and the voice of young Bingo polluted the air. The blighter had apparently risen with the lark.

" Leave me," I said, ' I would be alone. I can't see anybody till I've had my tea."

" When Cynthia smiles," said young Bingo, " the skies are blue ; the world takes on a roseate hue ; birds in the garden trill and sing, and Joy is king of everything, when Cynthia smiles." He coughed, changing gears. " When Cynthia frowns——"

" What the devil are you talking about ? "

" I'm reading you my poem. The one I wrote to Cynthia last night. I'll go on, shall I ? "

" No ! "

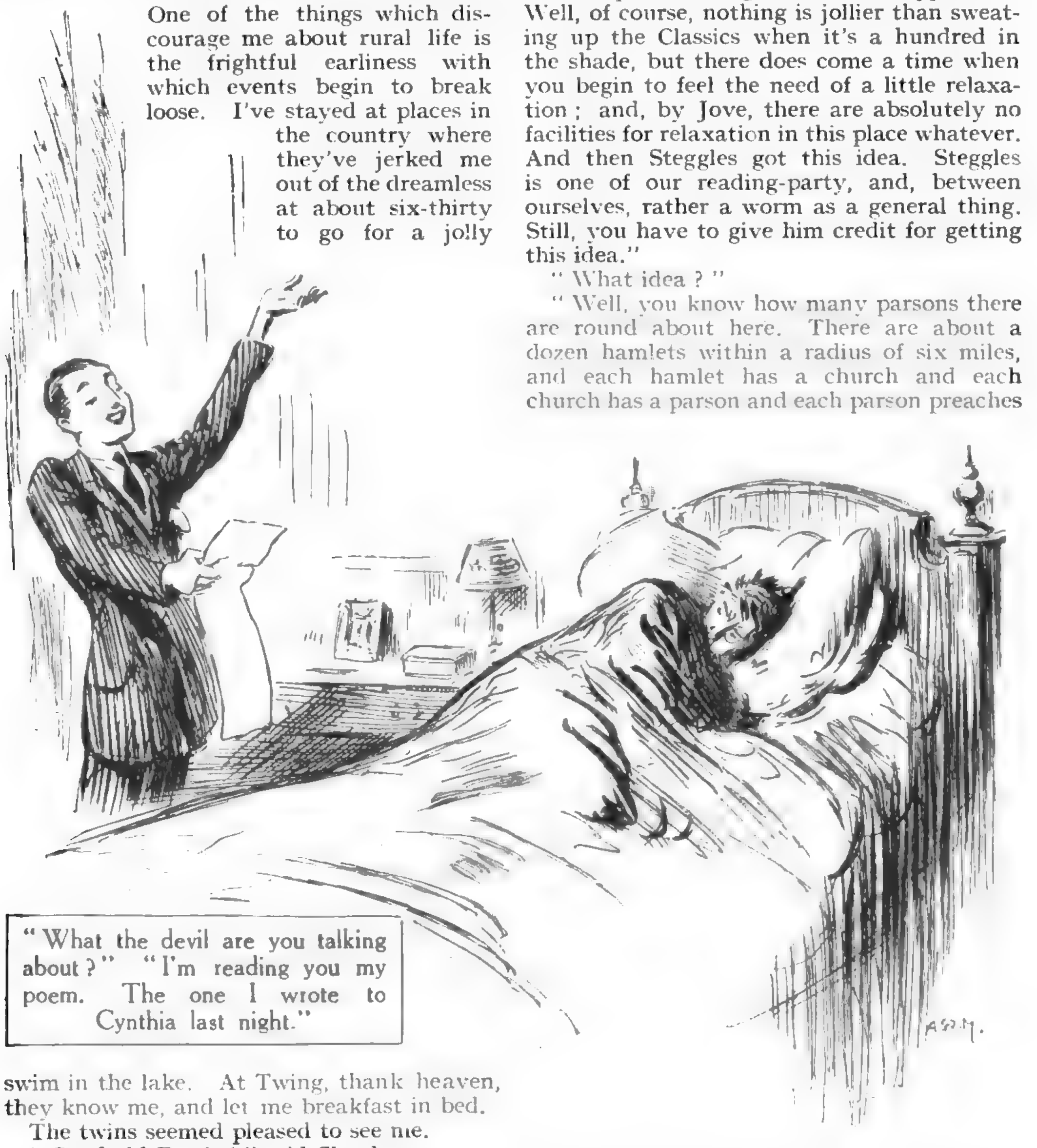
" No ? "

" No. I haven't had my tea."

At this moment Jeeves came in with the good old beverage, and I sprang on it with a glad cry. After a couple of sips things looked a bit brighter. Even young Bingo didn't offend the eye to quite such an extent. By the time I'd finished the first cup I was a new man, so much so that I not only

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permitted but encouraged the poor fish to read the rest of the bally thing, and even went so far as to criticize the scansion of the fourth line of the fifth verse. We were still arguing the point when the door burst open and in blew Claude and Eustace.



"What the devil are you talking about?" "I'm reading you my poem. The one I wrote to Cynthia last night."

One of the things which discourage me about rural life is the frightful earliness with which events begin to break loose. I've stayed at places in the country where they've jerked me out of the dreamless at about six-thirty to go for a jolly swim in the lake. At Twing, thank heaven, they know me, and let me breakfast in bed.

The twins seemed pleased to see me.

"Good old Bertie!" said Claude.

"Stout fellow!" said Eustace. "The Rev. told us you had arrived. I thought that letter of mine would fetch you."

"You can always bank on Bertie," said Claude. "A sportsman to the finger-tips. Well, has Bingo told you about it?"

"Not a word. He's been——"

"We've been talking," said Bingo, hastily, "of other matters."

Claude pinched the last slice of thin bread-and-butter, and Eustace poured himself out a cup of tea.

"It's like this, Bertie," said Eustace, settling down cosily. "As I told you in my letter, there are nine of us marooned in this desert spot, reading with old Heppenstall. Well, of course, nothing is jollier than sweating up the Classics when it's a hundred in the shade, but there does come a time when you begin to feel the need of a little relaxation; and, by Jove, there are absolutely no facilities for relaxation in this place whatever. And then Steggles got this idea. Steggles is one of our reading-party, and, between ourselves, rather a worm as a general thing. Still, you have to give him credit for getting this idea."

"What idea?"

"Well, you know how many parsons there are round about here. There are about a dozen hamlets within a radius of six miles, and each hamlet has a church and each church has a parson and each parson preaches a sermon every Sunday. To-morrow week—Sunday the twenty-third—we're running off the great Sermon Handicap. Steggles is making the book. Each parson is to be clocked by a reliable steward of the course, and the one that preaches the longest sermon wins. Did you study the race-card I sent you?"

"I couldn't understand what it was all about."

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"Why, you chump, it gives the handicaps and the current odds on each starter. I've got another one here, in case you've lost yours. Take a careful look at it. It gives you the thing in a nutshell. Jeeves, old son, do you want a sporting flutter?"

"Sir?" said Jeeves, who had just meandered in with my breakfast.

Claude explained the scheme. Amazing the way Jeeves grasped it right off. But he merely smiled in a paternal sort of way.

"Thank you, sir, I think not."

"Well, you're with us, Bertie, aren't you?" said Claude, sneaking a roll and a slice of bacon. "Have you studied that card? Well, tell me, does anything strike you about it?"

Of course it did. It had struck me the moment I looked at it.

"Why, it's a sitter for old Heppenstall," I said. "He's got the event sewed up in a parcel. There isn't a parson in the land who could give him eight minutes. Your pal Steggles must be an ass, giving him a handicap like that. Why, in the days when I was with him, old Heppenstall never used to preach under half an hour, and there was one sermon of his on Brotherly Love which lasted forty-five minutes if it lasted a second. Has he lost his vim lately, or what is it?"

"Not a bit of it," said Eustace. "Tell him what happened, Claude."

"Why," said Claude, 'the first Sunday we were here, we all went to Twing church, and old Heppenstall preached a sermon that was well under twenty minutes. This is what happened. Steggles didn't notice it, and the Rev. didn't notice it himself, but Eustace and I both spotted that he had dropped a chunk of at least half-a-dozen pages out of his sermon-case as he was walking up to the pulpit. He sort of flickered when he got to the gap in the manuscript, but carried on all right, and Steggles went away with the impression that twenty minutes or a bit under was his usual form. The next Sunday we heard Tucker and Starkie, and they both went well over the thirty-five minutes, so Steggles arranged the handicapping as you see on the card. You must come into this, Bertie. You see, the trouble is that I haven't a bean, and Eustace hasn't a bean, and Bingo Little hasn't a bean, so you'll have to finance the syndicate. Don't weaken! It's just putting money in all our pockets. Well, we'll have to be getting back now. Think the thing over, and 'phone me later in the day. And, if you let us down, Bertie, may a cousin's curse—— Come on, Claude, old thing."

The more I studied the scheme, the better it looked.

"How about it, Jeeves?" I said.

Jeeves smiled gently, and drifted out.

"Jeeves has no sporting blood," said Bingo.

"Well, I have. I'm coming into this. Claude's quite right. It's like finding money by the wayside."

"Good man!" said Bingo. "Now I can see daylight. Say I have a tenner on Heppenstall, and cop; that'll give me a bit in hand to back Pink Pill with in the two o'clock at Gatwick the week after next: cop on that, put the pile on Musk-Rat for the one-thirty at Lewes, and there I am with a nice little sum to take to Alexandra Park on September the tenth, when I've got a tip straight from the stable."

It sounded like a bit out of "Smiles's Self-Help."

"And then," said young Bingo, "I'll be in a position to go to my uncle and beard him in his lair somewhat. He's quite a bit of a snob, you know, and when he hears that I'm going to marry the daughter of an earl——"

"I say, old man," I couldn't help saying, "aren't you looking ahead rather far?"

"Oh, that's all right. It's true nothing's actually settled yet, but she practically told me the other day she was fond of me."

"What!"

"Well, she said that the sort of man she liked was the self-reliant, manly man with strength, good looks, character, ambition, and initiative."

"Leave me, laddie," I said. "Leave me to my fried egg."

DIRECTLY I'd got up I went to the 'phone, snatched Eustace away from his morning's work, and instructed him to put a tenner on the Twing flier at current odds for each of the syndicate; and after lunch Eustace rang me up to say that he had done business at a snappy seven-to-one, the odds having lengthened owing to a rumour in knowledgeable circles that the Rev. was subject to hay-fever, and was taking big chances strolling in the paddock behind the Vicarage in the early mornings. And it was dashed lucky, I thought next day, that we had managed to get the money on in time, for on the Sunday morning old Heppenstall fairly took the bit between his teeth, and gave us thirty-six solid minutes on Certain Popular Superstitions. I was sitting next to Steggles in the pew, and I saw him blench visibly. He was a little, rat-faced fellow, with shifty eyes and a suspicious nature. The first thing he did when we emerged into the open air was to announce, formally, that anyone who fancied the Rev. could now be accommodated at fifteen-to-eight on, and he added, in a rather nasty manner,

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that if he had his way, this sort of in-and-out running would be brought to the attention of the Jockey Club, but that he supposed that there was nothing to be done about it. This ruinous price checked the punters at once, and there was little money in sight. And so matters stood till just after lunch on Tuesday afternoon, when, as I was strolling up and down in front of the house with a cigarette, Claude and Eustace came bursting up the drive on bicycles, dripping with momentous news.

"Bertie," said Claude, deeply agitated, "unless we take immediate action and do a bit of quick thinking, we're in the cart."

"What's the matter?"

"G. Hayward's the matter," said Eustace, morosely. "The Lower Bingley starter."

"We never even considered him," said Claude. "Somehow or other, he got overlooked. It's always the way. Steggles overlooked him. We all overlooked him. But Eustace and I happened by the merest fluke to be riding through Lower Bingley this morning, and there was a wedding on at the church, and it suddenly struck us that it wouldn't be a bad move to get a line on G. Hayward's form, in case he might be a dark horse."

"And it was jolly lucky we did," said Eustace. "He delivered an address of twenty-six minutes by Claude's stop-watch. At a village wedding, mark you! What'll he do when he really extends himself!"

"There's only one thing to be done, Bertie," said Claude. "You must spring some more funds, so that we can hedge on Hayward and save ourselves."

"But——"

"Well, it's the only way out."

"But I say, you know, I hate the idea of all that money we put on Heppenstall being chucked away."

"What else can you suggest? You don't suppose the Rev. can give this absolute marvel a handicap and win, do you?"

"I've got it!" I said.

"What?"

"I see a way by which we can make it safe for our nominee. I'll pop over this afternoon, and ask him as a personal favour to preach that sermon of his on Brotherly Love on Sunday."

Claude and Eustace looked at each other, like those chappies in the poem, with a wild surmise.

"It's a scheme," said Claude.

"A jolly brainy scheme," said Eustace. "I didn't think you had it in you, Bertie."

"But even so," said Claude, "fizzer as that sermon no doubt is, will it be good enough in the face of a four-minute handicap?"

"Rather!" I said. "When I told you it lasted forty-five minutes, I was probably understating it. I should call it—from my recollection of the thing—nearer fifty."

"Then carry on," said Claude.

I toddled over in the evening and fixed the thing up. Old Heppenstall was most decent about the whole affair. He seemed pleased and touched that I should have remembered the sermon all these years, and said he had once or twice had an idea of preaching it again, only it had seemed to him, on reflection, that it was perhaps a trifle long for a rustic congregation.

"And in these restless times, my dear Wooster," he said, "I fear that brevity in the pulpit is becoming more and more desiderated by even the bucolic churchgoer, who one might have supposed would be less afflicted with the spirit of hurry and impatience than his metropolitan brother. I have had many arguments on the subject with my nephew, young Bates, who is taking my old friend Spettigue's cure over at Gandle-by-the-Hill. His view is that a sermon nowadays should be a bright, brisk, straight-from-the-shoulder address, never lasting more than ten or twelve minutes."

"Long?" I said. "Why, my goodness! you don't call that Brotherly Love sermon of yours *long*, do you?"

"It takes fully fifty minutes to deliver."

"Surely not?"

"Your incredulity, my dear Wooster, is extremely flattering—far more flattering, of course, than I deserve. Nevertheless, the facts are as I have stated. You are sure that I would not be well advised to make certain excisions and eliminations? You do not think it would be a good thing to cut, to prune? I might, for example, delete the rather exhaustive excursus into the family life of the early Assyrians?"

"Don't touch a word of it, or you'll spoil the whole thing," I said, earnestly.

"I am delighted to hear you say so, and I shall preach the sermon without fail next Sunday morning."

WHAT I have always said, and what I always shall say, is, that this ante-post betting is a mistake, an error, and a mug's game. You never can tell what's going to happen. If fellows would only stick to the good old S.P. there would be fewer young men go wrong. I'd hardly finished my breakfast on the Saturday morning, when Jeeves came to my bedside to say that Eustace wanted me on the telephone.

"Good Lord, Jeeves, what's the matter, do you think?"

I'm bound to say I was beginning to get a bit jumpy by this time.

"Mr. Eustace did not confide in me, sir."

"Has he got the wind up?"

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"Long?" I said. "Why, my goodness! You don't call that Brotherly Love sermon of yours *long*, do you?"

"Somewhat vertically, sir, to judge by his voice."

"Do you know what I think, Jeeves? Something's gone wrong with the favourite."

"Which is the favourite, sir?"

"Mr. Heppenstall. He's gone to odds on. He was intending to preach a sermon on Brotherly Love which would have brought him home by lengths. I wonder if anything's happened to him."

"You could ascertain, sir, by speaking to Mr. Eustace on the telephone. He is holding the wire."

"By Jove, yes!"

I shoved on a dressing-gown, and flew downstairs like a mighty, rushing wind. The moment I heard Eustace's voice I knew we were for it. It had a croak of agony in it.

"Bertie?"

"Here I am."

"Deuce of a time you've been. Bertie, we're sunk. The favourite's blown up."

"No!"

"Yes. Coughing in his stable all last night."

"What!"

"Absolutely! Hay-fever."

"Oh, my sainted aunt!"

"The doctor is with him now, and it's only a question of minutes before he's officially scratched. That means the curate will show up at the post instead, and he's no good at all. He is being offered at a hundred-to-six, but no takers. What shall we do?"

I had to grapple with the thing for a moment in silence.

"Eustace."

"Hallo?"

"What can you get on G. Hayward?"

"Only four-to-one now. I think there's been a leak, and Steggles has heard something. The odds shortened late last night in a significant manner."

"Well, four-to-one will clear us. Put another fiver all round on G. Hayward for the syndicate. That'll bring us out on the right side of the ledger."

"If he wins."

"What do you mean? I thought you considered him a cert, bar Heppenstall."

"I'm beginning to wonder," said Eustace, gloomily, "if there's such a thing as a cert. in this world. I'm told the Rev. Joseph Tucker did an extraordinarily fine trial gallop at a mothers' meeting over at Badgwick yesterday. However, it seems our only chance. So-long."

Not being one of the official stewards, I had my choice of churches next morning, and naturally I didn't hesitate. The only drawback to going to Lower Bingley was that it was ten miles away, which meant an early start, but I borrowed a bicycle from one of the grooms and tooled off. I had only Eustace's word for it that G. Hayward was such a stayer, and it might have been that he had showed too flattering form at that wedding where the twins had heard him preach; but any misgivings I may have had disappeared the moment he got into the pulpit. Eustace had been right. The man was a trier. He was a tall, rangy-looking greybeard, and he went off from the start with a nice, easy action, pausing and clearing his throat at the end of each sentence, and it wasn't five minutes before I realized that here was the winner. His habit of stopping dead and looking round the church at

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intervals was worth minutes to us, and in the home stretch we gained no little advantage owing to his dropping his pince-nez and having to grope for them. At the twenty-minute mark he had merely settled down. Twenty-five minutes saw him going strong. And when he finally finished with a good burst, the clock showed thirty-five minutes fourteen seconds. With the handicap which he had been given, this seemed to me to make the event easy for him, and it was with much *bonhomie* and goodwill to all men that I hopped on to the old bike and started back to the Hall for lunch.

Bingo was talking on the 'phone when I arrived.

"Fine! Splendid! Topping!" he was saying. "Eh? Oh, we needn't worry about him. Right-o, I'll tell Bertie." He hung up the receiver and caught sight of me. "Oh, hallo, Bertie; I was just talking to Eustace. It's all right, old man. The report from Lower Bingley has just got in. G. Hayward romps home."

"I knew he would. I've just come from there."

"Oh, were you there? I went to Badgwick. Tucker ran a splendid race, but the handicap was too much for him. Starkie had a sore throat and was nowhere. Roberts, of Fale-by-the-Water, ran third. Good old G. Hayward!" said Bingo, affectionately, and we strolled out on to the terrace.

"Are all the returns in, then?" I asked.

"All except Gandle-by-the-Hill. But we needn't worry about Bates. He never had a chance. By the way, poor old Jeeves loses his tenner. Silly ass!"

"Jeeves? How do you mean?"

"He came to me this morning, just after you had left, and asked me to put a tenner on Bates for him. I told him he was a chump and begged him not to throw his money away, but he would do it."

"I beg your pardon, sir. This note arrived for you just after you had left the house this morning."

Jeeves had materialized from nowhere, and was standing at my elbow.

"Eh? What? Note?"

"The Reverend Mr. Heppenstall's butler brought it over from the Vicarage, sir. It came too late to be delivered to you at the moment."

Young Bingo was talking to Jeeves like a father on the subject of betting against the form-book. The yell I gave made him bite his tongue in the middle of a sentence.

"What the dickens is the matter?" he asked, not a little peeved.

"We're dished! Listen to this!"

I read him the note:—

"The Vicarage,
"Twing, Glos.

"MY DEAR WOOSTER,—As you may have heard, circumstances over which I have no control will prevent my preaching the sermon on Brotherly Love for which you made such a flattering request. I am unwilling, however, that you shall be disappointed, so, if you will attend divine service at Gandle-by-the-Hill this morning, you will hear my sermon preached by young Bates, my nephew. I have lent him the manuscript at his urgent desire, for, between ourselves, there are wheels within wheels. My nephew is one of the candidates for the headmastership of a well-known public school, and the choice has narrowed down between him and one rival.

"Late yesterday evening James received private information that the head of the Board of Governors of the school proposed to sit under him this Sunday in order to judge of the merits of his preaching, a most important item in swaying the Board's choice. I acceded to his plea that I lend him my sermon on Brotherly Love, of which, like you, he apparently retains a vivid recollection. It would have been too late for him to compose a sermon of suitable length in place of the brief address which—mistakenly, in my opinion—he had designed to deliver to his rustic flock, and I wished to help the boy.

"Trusting that his preaching of the sermon will supply you with as pleasant memories as you say you have of mine, I remain,

"Cordially yours,
"F. HEPPENSTALL.

"P.S.—The hay-fever has rendered my eyes unpleasantly weak for the time being, so I am dictating this letter to my butler, Brookfield, who will convey it to you."

I DON'T know when I've experienced a more massive silence than the one that followed my reading of this cheery epistle. Young Bingo gulped once or twice, and practically every known emotion came and went on his face. Jeeves coughed one soft, low, gentle cough like a sheep with a blade of grass stuck in its throat, and then stood gazing serenely at the landscape. Finally young Bingo spoke.

"Great Scot!" he whispered, hoarsely. "An S.P. job!"

"I believe that is the technical term, sir," said Jeeves.

"So you had inside information, dash it!" said young Bingo.

"Why, yes, sir," said Jeeves. "Brookfield happened to mention the contents of the note to me when he brought it. We are old friends."

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Bingo registered grief, anguish, rage, despair, and resentment.

"Well, all I can say," he cried, "is that it's a bit thick! Preaching another man's sermon! Do you call that honest? Do you call that playing the game?"

"Well, my dear old thing," I said, "be fair. It's quite within the rules. Clergymen do it all the time. They aren't expected always to make up the sermons they preach."

Jeeves coughed again, and fixed me with an expressionless eye.

"And in the present case, sir, if I may be permitted to take the liberty of making the observation, I think we should make allowances. We should remember that the securing of this headmastership meant everything to the young couple."

"Young couple! What young couple?"

"The Reverend James Bates, sir, and Lady Cynthia. I am informed by her ladyship's maid that they have been engaged to be married for some weeks—provisionally, so to speak; and his lordship made his consent conditional on Mr. Bates securing a really important and remunerative position."

Young Bingo turned a light green.

"Engaged to be married!"

"Yes, sir."



"So you had inside information, dash it?" said young Bingo.

There was a silence.

"I think I'll go for a walk," said Bingo.

"But, my dear old thing," I said, "it's just lunch-time. The gong will be going any minute now."

"I don't want any lunch!" said Bingo.

Next month: "The Purity of the Turf."

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"THE BOOK I SHALL NEVER WRITE"

A SYMPOSIUM OF AUTHORS ON A DELIGHTFUL AND SUGGESTIVE IDEA.

WHAT is the book which, in your mind, you hope to write, but which, in your heart, you know you never will write? That question has been put by THE STRAND MAGAZINE to some of our best-known authors—with results worthy of a word of preface.

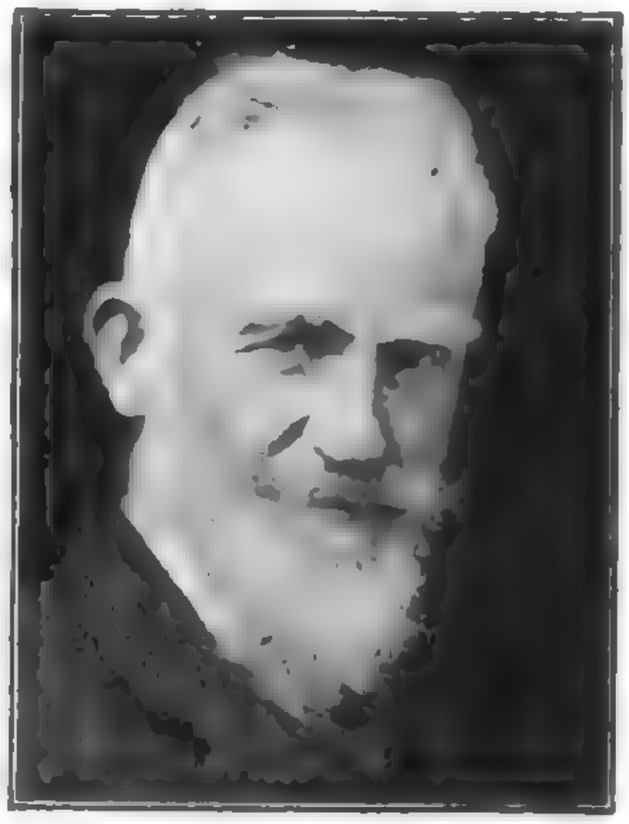
Every writer, one may suppose, has a pet book that he, or she, may or may not write. It may be a different book at different times, or it may always be the same book. No great writer lays down his pen without feeling that there is something it has not achieved, which he had counted on it to achieve. Thomas Hardy once said he had plots for a dozen novels that he had never found time to write; only in his later years he has made up for that by giving us "The Dynasts," which contains material for at least three novels.

Here, however, the intriguing idea is the particular book that a man, or woman, has longed to write, has not written, and almost certainly never will write. It is an idea which brings to the eye of fancy a lost library, a lost literary legion, a sort of literary Sea of Saragossa, wherein literary *Flying Dutchmen* sail like wraiths; and so, like all delightful ideas, it has sorrow in it.

But one can give a name to some of those craft, paper-white in appearance, because the ink never fell in pen-holders to darken them. Did not John, Viscount Morley, mean, and hold the intention for years, to write a history of the New Italy raised by Garibaldi and Mazzini and Cavour? Politics took his activities before that work on the New Italy took shape, and now, from his retirement at Wimbledon, he can only look backward and reflect that it was, perhaps, a greater thing to give India the basis of self-government than to write any book, even his "Gladstone," of which men already speak beside Lockhart's "Scott," for Boswell's "Johnson" is peerless. Was it not Jowett's ambition to re-write Thomas à Kempis on Balliol lines? But he never did it; he knew in his heart he never could do it.

Come we, however, to the present quest and pursuit, and we have Countess Russell, authoress of "Elizabeth and Her German Garden," telling us, in so many words, "No, I don't know of a book I want to write and won't write." "No," says Mr. John Masefield, "I have no such book in my mind, at present," and the slight qualification there is worth not ng. Sir Gilbert Parker's answer is: "I don't know of any book that I want to write that I have not written, or tried to write."

"But I'm going to write it," is the laconic word from Mr. E. V. Lucas; and Miss May Sinclair is in even better case, for she is able to say, "I have already written the book I had in my mind to write, and thought I never would." One wonders which of her books it is, because the circumstance would give it a special interest. Mr. H. G. Wells has also done the trick in "Boon," which, as you may remember, appeared anonymously. There might have been a second volume of "Boon" if the first had not been so successful, but, even so, it is left for Mr. Wells, as he half undertakes in his "Russia in Shadow," to write "The Shaving of Karl Marx."



Mr. Bernard Shaw.

With that trot for the avenue, we reach the fuller answers received by THE STRAND in response to its inquiry, and they are best left to speak for themselves: and, indeed, in their variety of authorship and confession they make a very entertaining and informing symposium, thus:—

Mr. BERNARD SHAW.

I have no time for hoping. I have written more books than I ever expected to write. I do not keep my goods in my heart. What is the shop window for, pray?

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Mr. J. J. Bell.



Mr. Hugh Walpole.



Mr. E. F. Benson.

Mr. J. J. BELL.

It is a pathetic but not a tragic thought—that book which I shall never write. Tragic, however, is the thought of those books which I wish I had never written.

Mr. HUGH WALPOLE.

I can only say that the book I have hoped to write and know that I never shall write is the book as I see it before me just before I begin to write it.

Mr. E. F. BENSON.

The book which I mean to write and never will, has neither narrative nor description of any kind in it, and I don't think even the names of the characters ever appear. They reveal themselves, their marvellously complicated and wonderful natures, and the whole dramatic situation with its astounding *dénouement* entirely by what they say. The book will be of immense length, and nobody will be able to lay it down till he has finished it. The social, economical, political, mental, physical, and spiritual life of England will stand still for that period.



Ian Hay
(Major J. H. Beith).

IAN HAY (Major J. H. Beith).

Most authors cherish a dream of breaking away one day from routine and writing something immortal on some great, new, and hitherto unconquered subject. But they never do. The reason is that their readers will not allow it. Your steady novel-reader does not like to have his oats changed. Once he has decided what you are—a realist, or a feminist, or a humorist, or what not—he sees to it that you remain humbly and reverently in that station to which *Vox Populi* has appointed you, and continue to turn out realism or feminism or humour at regular intervals and current rates. In my own case, I find I am expected to produce narratives dealing with the common joys and sorrows of ordinary people—particularly young people—treated from the angle of a would-be humorous philosophy. If I were suddenly to launch out as a destructive realist—by which I mean a writer who conducts his followers into one of the many deep tragedies of existence and leaves them there without troubling to indicate any way out; or if I were to join that frankly morbid school of soul-dissectors and sex-analysts who are enjoying (so far as they appear capable of enjoying anything) so great a vogue to-day, I should be inundated with protests from people I had disappointed—either parents and guardians, who have hitherto approved of me because they have not found it necessary to wade through each succeeding work of mine before passing it on to the family, or old-fashioned persons (not necessarily old) who still believe, with Dr. Johnson, that a book should help us "either to enjoy life or to endure it." These would say that I had betrayed them, and I should feel on the whole inclined to agree.

Yes, we story-tellers are all in the same boat, except a few, the immortals. They can write of what they like—Hamlet, Falstaff, Lear, or Bottom the Weaver—and there are no complaints.

Still; that does not prevent us from *wanting* to achieve some pet story-telling

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ambition. Personally I should like to write an Anglo-American novel which would be equally sympathetic and equally intelligible to Englishmen and Americans; which would do for the English-speaking world something of what Rudyard Kipling has done for the British Empire. A tremendous task; I, for one, can never hope to compass it. But I hope that some day someone will arise who can.

Miss CLEMENCE DANE.

Oh, what a dreadful question in holiday time! I don't think I ever really considered the subject, because, you know, one lives in the book of the moment, to some extent. I can tell you what I always say I should dearly love to write, though I don't suppose I shall ever manage it, and that is a really good fairy story for children. I'd rather have written "Alice in Wonderland" than any novel since Jane Austen. And, oh, how I envy the authors of "The Golden Age" and "The Phœnix and the Carpet"!



Miss Clemence Dane.

Mr. THOMAS BURKE.

The idea is interesting. I think the book I would like to write would be a big jolly book, ten sizes larger than life, which should cover every phase of London life and include characters representative of every phase. It should be comically gigantesque; twenty novels in one; twenty biographies; not mere outlines, but full, clustering records. It should be full of love of the earth and of mankind, but it should show things as they are; it should present everything and pardon everything. In short, such a book would be Shakespeare, Fielding, Dickens, Rabelais, Balzac, Browning, and Meredith in collaboration.

Mr. JOHN GALSWORTHY.

In asking me to contribute to your symposium on "books one hopes to write but knows one never will," you embarrass me, because I haven't any. What, then, am I to say? I don't begin to hope, apparently, until my mind suggests possibility. I expect there's something very deep in that, but I don't know what it is. I have sometimes thought that it would be nice to write the best book that was ever written, but I couldn't honestly say I'd ever hoped to.

Sir HENRY NEWBOLT.

I don't like answering your painful question. I live on hope, and cannot give up even my imaginary children for dead. You apply the thumb-screw; it hurts horribly and I squeak; but I do not confess. Even if I did, I might turn out to be wrong, after all. "If hopes be dupes, fears may be liars," and what a fool I should look if the book, which I had given up for lost, were to come home some day and go about in society. The discredit would extend even to your otherwise admirable article.

Mrs. C. N. WILLIAMSON.

Of course there's a book of my heart; and it's in my heart, where, alas, it is likely to stay, without ever seeing the light. You see, it has grown so big and round that it fits into every heart-interstice; therefore



Mr. Thomas Burke.



Mr. John Galsworthy.



Sir Henry Newbolt.

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it could only be extricated with a pickaxe and hammer, while the walls of my heart fell into ruins all around it.

After that preface, you will be surprised to hear that it isn't a love-story; that is, not above all a love-story, though love runs through it, as it does in all *real* stories. It's a book about London.

In it are packed all the splendid and happy, sordid and sad, mysterious and wonderful things that I have felt and found out about London. For years I have collected learned volumes about London, thinking that they might "come in useful," but after all, if I were to write my book, I fancy I should hardly use them. I should use only the notes stored away in my own heart, where—alas for me!—I fear they'll always stay.



Mrs. C. N. Williamson.



Mr. Arnold Bennett.

Mr. ARNOLD BENNETT.

So far as I know I have no books in mind which will not materialize in due course. If I want to write a book I write it. And if I know I can't write it, I don't want to write it.

Sir W. ROBERTSON NICOLL.

The book which I hoped to write was a History of British Journalism in the Victorian Era. I am not without hope of being able to use, in some form, part of the material I have accumulated, but I shall never have the strength for the really elaborate work which for years I had in my mind.

Mr. H. DE VERE STACPOOLE.

I would like to write a book about what happens to a man and a woman after they are dead and if they die in the true faith—in short, if they are lovers—or if they were lovers, I suppose I ought to put it, for the accepted opinion seems to be that death is a sort of divorce court. I am sick of hearing that the soul of man is immortal from people who accept the idea that love is mortal.



Mr. H. de Vere Stacpoole.

Mr. W. J. LOCKE.

Yes, I've toyed with the idea of a book that will never, I fear, be written, for years beyond number—written round an early seventeenth-century French figure who, oddly enough, has never been exploited by my tribe. I can't give away my secret thunder, for someone cleverer than myself will steal it and I shall be bereaved of my beautiful unwritten book. Besides — who knows?—it may be the solace of my senile years!

Mr. G. K. CHESTERTON



Mr. G. K. Chesterton.

I can assure you that the work I should like to do, and never shall, is more like a library than a book. Besides the books I should like to write, there are even more that I should like other people to write. There is a story about a man who manufactured a climate, which I have set down for Mr. H. G. Wells; and one about Queen Victoria and Lord Melbourne, which is awaiting the attention of Mr Max Beerbohm. What I should really like to write would be a true romance of the Middle Ages, in which a reasonable amount of fighting and killing should be combined with some faint comprehension of what men thought worth fighting for, and how they felt about having to die. For instance, the Franciscans in Flanders preached against people very like modern pessimists; the fight between St. Francis and Schopenhauer would go down to the roots, if religion were neither ignored nor patronized. But it would need the learning of Flaubert, or of Mr. Wells's forthcoming work on the climate-maker. Such a lot of science is needed for such a little art.

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Mr. ROBERT HICHENS.

The book one is always going to write but never succeeds in writing! In looking back over a fairly long career as an author I have sought in my memory for that legendary book. Did I ever have wonderful dreams of the masterpiece which would carry my name to the ends of the earth? Did I ever feel I had it in me to create a work which would become a classic in my lifetime? Whenever I sat down to begin a new book did I say to myself, "This will be the greatest novel ever written"?

If I am to be strictly honest and sincere—I don't think I ever did.

A great deal of nonsense is thought and expressed about writers. Some people seem to imagine that no well-known author ever takes up his pen without being "inspired." Others evidently suppose that books write themselves, that the man or woman with a certain "gift of invention" has only to sit in front of a writing-table and that a first-rate book immediately "comes." I wish it did come. But most of us have to fetch it. If the public knew how much labour many books have cost their authors, they would probably be astonished.

Tolstoi's eldest daughter once told me that one of her father's works—I think it was "Master and Man"—had been written and re-written, typed and re-typed, about thirty times before he let it go to the printer. Flaubert used to sit for days over a paragraph. Were these men dreaming of masterpieces? Perhaps they were. They certainly created them, but at a great cost.

Sometimes a writer who wishes to do his best thinks about a subject for a long time before he feels ready to work on it. I had the idea of "The Garden of Allah" in my mind for several years before I wrote a word of the book. I longed to begin it, but I felt that the moment had not come, that I was not capable of treating the theme which was haunting me as I wished to treat it. Nevertheless, I don't remember thinking that "The Garden of Allah" was going to be my masterpiece. I merely wished to write it as well as I was able to, to spare no pains on its creation!



Mr. W. J. Locke.

Writers no doubt are sometimes fortunate people and receive many compliments. I have had some left-handed ones. Quite recently I was at a big tennis tournament, where I met a rather well-known man, who told me he had been at the first night of "The Garden of Allah" at Drury Lane Theatre.

"How long did the play run?" he continued.

I told him it had run for nearly ten months.

"Well, you made a great mistake!" he rejoined.

"What was that?" said I.

"You could easily have turned it into another 'Chu Chin Chow.' You should have written it up a bit, made it more lively, and brought in some songs and dances. When I saw it I said, 'This is another "Chu Chin Chow"—with a little care.'"

Thus are writers occasionally chastened, lest perchance they should have too good a conceit of themselves.

But I am getting away from the subject of the book the writer dreams of but never writes.

What more can I say about that?

Really, I can only say that I have written several books very much as I intended to write them. No doubt they might have been far better if someone else had written them. But that, unfortunately, can't be helped. One does what one can. I prefer writing what I can write to dreaming of extraordinary masterpieces which neither I nor anyone else will ever write.

I fear I am very prosaic, though it never occurred to me to suggest to Miss Mary Anderson that she and I might liven up "The Garden of Allah."



Sir W. Robertson Nicoll.



Mr. Robert Hichens.

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THE GIANT FIR-CONES

by

HAROLD STEEVENS

ILLUSTRATED BY UGO MATANIA

WHEN, years ago, Richard Beltony made his will as he did, he certainly had no idea that he was within an ace of signing his little blue-eyed daughter's death-warrant. Had he known it, he would without a doubt have restrained his desire to stretch out his hand into the future and, in defiance of his own mortality, to ensure the eminence of his name and strain among the generations beyond his ken. For his wife and daughter were his passion, while money was merely his hobby, and the Beltony stock his whim. But of that more anon.

The trail of fate was irrevocably laid when I happened to meet that blue-eyed maid, now grown to entrancing womanhood, in a decent French hotel overlooking the Mediterranean Sea in the neighbourhood of Cap Martin. This was in May, 19—; you may perhaps recall the year when I mention that the summer was particularly hot and dry, and that the forest fires which are inevitable in such circumstances were numerous and devastating on the southern slopes of the Alpes Maritimes and all along that sun-blessed seaboard.

At this late stage of the season the various hotels of the "palace" variety were already closed or closing. The northward stampede of *hivernants* had long since run its congested course, shops *de luxe* were putting up their shutters for the summer, and the Coast was settling down to somnolence and languorous enjoyment of the season's profits.

There were not more than a handful of us left at the Hôtel du Sapin d'Or, and, as people do in such circumstances, we dispensed with starch in both senses of the word and made friends all round in self-defence. Miss Beltony and I were the only English people in the "mess" and naturally gravitated towards one another. She was slightly but graciously built; her expression rather than her features commended her to notice; her voice, however, was extraordinarily alluring, and behind the sadness of her eyes vivacity and courage were enthroned.

Her mourning garb imposed restraint upon our conversation, and, flirtation being clearly out of bounds, we instinctively felt free to talk more confidentially about other things. I learned that she had lately lost her father and mother within a very short period of each other; her mother had really died of grief. She herself had been passionately devoted to both parents: they must have been an uncommonly close-knit trio.

So, after a peculiarly sheltered and happy, if rather solitary, girlhood, she had suddenly found herself alone in the world, and a desire to fly from the scene of her past happiness had seized her. Hence her presence here. She was vague about her relatives, and hardly seemed to know whether she had any or not.

Gladly would I have piloted her about the neighbourhood, but in the circumstances I did not care to press my company upon her. I usually got away to the hills in the morning and stayed there, tramping, climbing, and reading till late in the afternoon. She, poor girl, still lacked her natural energy, and seldom went farther than the ancient olive-wood, where the paths were still purple-stained with the fallen fruit of the veterans and their progeny—for an olive-wood need never die. There, one day, I happened to find her.

It was the first time I had ever seen her out of doors. She was dressed in white, with a sash of black ribbon round her slender waist, and a beam of sunshine, falling on her bare

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head through an opening in the branches, filled her hair with golden lights. Sitting there in the crook of a low branch, with her back against the hoary trunk and her feet dangling, she looked like the very spirit of the wood.

She glanced up when she heard my footsteps coming towards her, then flushed slightly (I was glad of that sign of returning life), but my matter-of-fact greeting quickly put her at her ease.

"You're looking better, Miss Beltony," I said.

"Thank you," she answered, with a little smile. "It is difficult to feel sad for ever in such a climate."

"Don't try," I said. "And in particular there's something very cheerful about this wood. Look at all these jolly little chaps springing up round the old parents. Why, there's a regular ring of them over there, and a blank space in the middle where the ancestor used to stand. It is the law of life."

It was rather a rough thing to say to her, but she took no offence. She pondered a

Sitting in the crook of a low branch, she looked like the very spirit of the wood.

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moment, then gave herself a mental shake and said, almost cheerfully :—

"I've found my long-lost cousin, Mr. Canning."

"Oh!" said I. "I did not know you had one. Is it a man or a woman?"

"A man," she said. "Look!" And she handed me a letter.

It was written in rather a foreign hand, but the English of it was good enough :—

"*Dear Cousin Esterdine* (it ran), *I have only just heard that you are staying on this coast, and I was not aware until to-day of the great loss you have recently suffered. I hasten to offer you all my sympathy.*

"*I should like to know you; may I call one day? You know, I expect, that my poor father left England many years ago, when he was quite a young man, and drifted out of touch with his brother, though I have never heard that there was any disagreement between them, nor any ground for it. In any case, there need be none between us, need there?*

"*Your affectionate cousin,*

"CHARLES BELTONY."

"I am so glad!" she exclaimed, when I had come to the end of the letter. "It's so lonely without a family, you know, and I'm sure he's a nice man. Don't you think so?"

Her eyes were sparkling with new-found delight.

"It looks like it," I answered. "It's quite a proper letter."

We walked back together by the rough sea path above the rocks, where the scent of myrtle and rosemary blends subtly with the smell of the sea and the pines. It was a bitter-sweet hour for me, because, while the touch of her hand as I helped her over the bad places was ecstasy, I was experiencing for the first time in my life the tyrant power of jealousy. Still, I resolutely told myself, if he turns out to be a good fellow, so much the better. But down in the depths of me I wished that he had never been born.

She wrote to him that night, inviting him to lunch or dinner on the next day but two—a margin of time is always advisable where Riviera posts are concerned. He came to lunch, so I heard, and he stayed to dine. I kept to my own table, but studied him pretty closely from a distance.

He was a well-built, handsome fellow enough, and well-groomed—rather over-groomed, I thought. His hands were freshly manicured, and I caught a whiff of scent from their direction which I knew was not Esterdine's. Moreover, his good looks were on the coarse side, and, although he was naturally powerful, he was not in hard condition. His general appearance gave more than a hint of self-indulgent living—so, at least, I summed him up, possibly with a jaundiced eye.

Esterdine seemed to like him, and certainly, judging by her laughter (she was giving him champagne), found him more amusing than she found me; along with his half-foreign style and appearance, he had obviously acquired the foreigner's liveliness, not to say audacity, in conversation. I loathed him for it.

THE days which followed were purgatory. Esterdine was just as frank and friendly as before, whenever I saw her, but that was just the rotten part of it: I never did see her by herself, or scarcely ever. That fellow Beltony was always about, and his standing as a relative gave him privileges which I, as a simple acquaintance, could not possibly claim. She seemed to place the entire daily round of her existence in his hands, confidently and even thankfully; I never realized before how a woman, for all her claims to independence, dearly loves to be taken charge of.

In similar circumstances I should probably have hated an archangel, but it was not long before I found reason to distrust, as well as to dislike, Beltony. She had introduced us, of course, and one evening after dinner he and I sat chatting in the *salle*. Beltony had done justice, as usual, to the hotel cellar.

"Do you know who she is, Canning, my boy?" he asked, in a confidential tone, with more than a hint of glee in it. "She's old Beltony's heiress. The old chap made pots of money—a regular wizard—and it's all come to her. She's worth winning, eh?"

He paused, in bibulous gloating, then went on, as much to himself as to me: "And there's another thing, though I doubt if she's thought of that"—he tapped himself on the chest—"Charles Beltony is——" He caught my stony eye and checked himself. I rose without a word and went out on to the balcony.

These careless words of his disgusted and disturbed me, yet, curiously enough, they acted as a tonic. The depressing sense of being "out of it" left me; perhaps there was a part for me in this little drama after all!

Three days later I was sure of it. I had been out at Gorbio, village of mules, and on my way back I left the regular mule-path, went on past the Caupière, and dropped down by an even rougher track into the Orta valley, reaching the high Corniche road at the point where it strikes deep into the mountains and passes round the head of the Ramingau gully. Then, in order to escape the dust and stench of the motor-cars, I took to the woods and marched in the pleasant shade. Ultimately I found myself on a sort

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of knoll or cliff which projects over the road near the hill village of Roquebrune.

Far beneath, the blue Mediterranean sparkled in the sunshine. I sat down for a rest and a smoke; presently I edged back into the shade—the sun was burning hot—lay flat on the slithery pine-needles, and dozed.

I need not tell you what I was dreaming about when I became aware of voices on the road beneath—the harsh, heated voices of a quarrelling man and woman. The interruption vexed me, it was so incongruous, and I have no doubt I should have shut my ears to it but that the man's voice was familiar to me. It was Beltony's, I could swear.

"My dear girl"—he was talking rapidly and excitedly, with a queer, foreign twang to his words—"I can't help myself; I've told you that a dozen times. I'm in the devil of a mess, and you know it. I'm absolutely desperate. It's money or it's choky for me—and it's not going to be choky if I can help it. I'll stick at nothing, Céline, and if anybody interferes with my game—well, you know me! And remember, I'm only half an Englishman. My mother was *vraie Niçoise* —and when my brigand blood is up——"

The woman said something in a lower tone —I think she was crying—but the man burst out on her furiously:—

"Don't be a fool! Who's going to desert you? I tell you I don't. I don't care a fig for her!"

I was thoroughly awake now, and turned abruptly on my elbow to get to my feet, but I slipped on the pine-needles and shot down the steep bank towards the edge of the little cliff, sending a small avalanche of earth, dust, and stones flying before me. There was a startled oath from below: '*Sacré nom de*——" Then the voice broke off short.

My feet caught against a tough little rosemary bush growing at the brink, and as I brought up with a jerk I heard footsteps retreating on the hard Corniche road. I wriggled round until I could look over the edge.

They were just turning a bend in the road, and I only saw their backs, but it was Beltony, sure enough, and a showily-dressed woman, young and of good figure, so far as I could judge, was hurrying along beside him. Beltony glanced over his shoulder just before he went out of sight, but if he saw me at all —which I doubt—he could hardly have recognized me through the bushes and with the sun in his eyes. It was just as well that he did not.

Upon my word, he was a cool hand! There he was at Esterdine's table that night, smooth and entertaining as ever, though a shade haggard under his dark skin, I thought, and a little forced and wild in manner.

The night felt chilly after the great heat of the day, and an elderly French officer, home from Senegal, asked for a fire. The waiter brought in fir-cones and billets of olive-wood, and in a few minutes a little fire was roaring away behind the shutters in the safe-like recess which serves as a fire-place in those parts: it gives out no heat to notice, but it looks warm.

Esterdine had never seen that kind of fire before, and it amused her.

"Where do the big cones come from?" she asked the waiter when he brought round the dessert.

"From the mountains, madame," he answered, with a smile and a vague sweep of his arm in the direction of the hills.

"But they must look splendid hanging on the tree!" she exclaimed. "Where do they grow? Does anybody know?" The conversation usually became general as soon as the serious courses had received proper attention.

"Mostly in the back country," Beltony answered, quickly. "But you find them occasionally nearer the coast. There's one on that ridge behind Roquebrune, and I know a still better one on the Castellar side—a magnificent tree, really magnificent!"

"I *should* like to see it!" cried Esterdine. "Is it too far away, do you think, Cousin Charles?"

"Not a bit!" cried Beltony. "We should take mules, of course; I wouldn't think of asking you to walk."

"Oh," she answered, dubiously. Then she had an idea: "We'll make up a party, shall we? Who will come to Castellar on muleback to see the giant fir-cones?"

But before the company could reply Beltony broke in with a semblance of boyish enthusiasm:—

"I know a couple of first-rate mulewomen," he said, leaning forward confidentially; "decent, motherly souls—I am sure you'd love them. That is, if you don't mind a mixed collection of the younger generation as well; they generally manage to pick up a few of the family on the way up. Anyhow, we shouldn't be lonely."

So Esterdine's doubts were cleverly brushed aside.

ON the appointed day I made an excuse to walk down with them to Mentone.

I do not pretend that I had any actual presentiment of evil (I am *not* psychic), but I was pretty anxious in a general way, as you may imagine, after what I had overheard.

If I could not openly interfere, I could at least hold a watching brief, and that I resolved to do. If anything were to happen, Francis Canning would not be far away; that I swore.

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A couple of well-tended mules were waiting under the palm trees on the Mentone promenade, and as they approached, two lean and sunburnt *muletières*, wearing the picturesque native costume, came up and greeted us.

Beltony chaffed them in the *patois*, which I did not understand, while he helped Esterdine to mount. The cavalcade went off merrily, the mulewomen, staves in hand, footing it on the flank with long, loose strides. I continued my way along the seashore, turned up into the old town, and, by making a *détour*, in the course of an hour and a half or thereabouts I reached the mountain-side to the east of Castellar, whence I could look down upon the little village and the country round about. I was convinced, from Beltony's casually-worded invitation, that it was in this wild forest region that his giant fir-cones grew.

The stumps of many a stout tree showed that the timber-cutters had been busy during the winter and spring. Heavy logs still lay about haphazard just as they had fallen, in all sorts of grotesque positions. Close by, almost above my head, ran the aerial cable by means of which the cut logs are sent down to the valley. From where I stood I could see it stretching like a thread of black cotton over the tree-tops, while at the top of the clearing, some fifty yards up the slope, a log still hung suspended to the travelling cradle, just as it had been left when the woodmen knocked off work.

I watched the eastern exit of the village, because I guessed that the mule party would have halted for an early lunch in the garden of the little restaurant at Castellar. And, sure enough, I had just finished my sandwiches and fruit, and lit a caporal cigarette, when they came into sight.

In the clear mountain atmosphere Esterdine's white dress and broad black sash were unmistakable. She was riding side by side with Beltony and he was pointing with outstretched arm towards the country below me. Presently they turned a bend in the road and the contour of the country hid them from view.

I must admit that I felt rather a fool, and an unmannerly one at that. What on earth, I asked myself, could possibly happen amiss at full noontide on a glorious day in June, during a simple muleback excursion such as hundreds of visitors make every season with never a mishap? But then I went over in my mind once more the scene at Roquebrune and the remark which Beltony had incautiously made to me that night at the hotel when his tongue was loosened by drink. And there were other little things that I had noticed, all tending to the same conclusion—that he had some diabolical scheme in hand, and that it had to do with Esterdine. He was certainly a scamp and no fit company for her, and, unmannerly fool or not, I would put a spoke in his wheel if I had half a chance.

Meanwhile, they were somewhere in the forest below me, and I was as near at hand as I could very well be without actually stalking them. So I sat back against a log with my legs stretched out, breathing the aromatic breeze which the parched land drew in to itself from the sea.

I CANNOT be sure what it was that made me look towards Castellar; I believe it was the strident bray of a mule. But anyhow, I looked, and what I saw brought me to my feet in an instant. Two mules were trotting briskly along the road towards the village, and some little distance behind them strode the mulewomen. Now, what startled me was this. Although they were too far away for me to recognize them in detail, nevertheless, by what I can only call a trick of ocular memory, I did recognize them, and with absolute certainty. They were the same that I had seen traversing that short stretch of road a few hours before; but this time they were returning and—the mules were riderless!

What could it mean? Where were Esterdine and her cousin? Of course, it was possible that they had sent the *muletières* back to Castellar, with orders to wait for them there. Yet why should they do that? The mules could have waited just as well in the forest; moreover, the best of the afternoon was already gone, dusk came early in the woods, and the paths, as I knew from experience, were vague and misleading, as well as rough. Knowing, too, what I did of Beltony, I was alarmed and exasperated to think of his being alone with Esterdine in such circumstances.

To get down the mountain-side and search for them in about a square mile of woodland country would be like looking for a needle in a bottle of hay, but it was the only thing to do. I certainly could not stay still.

I was casting my eye over the ground to decide upon the best line of descent, when I became aware of a faint smell of burning, and, facing the breeze, I discerned, far down the slope in a dip of the wood, a thin film of bluish smoke entangled in the spiky tops of the pine trees. I did not think much of that; it might come from a tramp's bivouac, or even from a forester's hut, for aught I knew. Yet, as I looked, the smoke gathered substance and volume, and in a few seconds a thick white column was rolling upwards and spreading in a cloud of increasing density straight towards where I was standing.

Now, if the forest caught fire, it would

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burn like a torch after such a spell of drought and heat ; and if the wind held, the conflagration would sweep up the mountain-side and no earthly power could stop it until it burnt itself out on the barren rock above the timber-line. Suppose that Esterdine were in the line of its march !

A tongue of flame flashed up in the thickest of the smoke, dropped back for an instant, then came again with other tongues, leapt higher, and went back no more.

I took one stride downwards, then checked myself and stood stock-still. From somewhere in the depths of the silent wood I had heard the sound of a woman's scream, followed instantly by a very explosion of shouted objurgation.

Another scream, more piercing than the first, and the demoniac tirade swelled into a tornado of yelling frenzy—a manifestation abominable, monstrous, obscene, a scandal to heaven.

With every nerve in my body quivering, I took my bearings from the sound as well as I could and plunged across the clearing. A quick glance over the tree-tops showed me that the fire was already moving forward in a widening path of up-shooting flames, and a vast drift of opaque dun smoke swept before it.

Scarcely had I taken a dozen paces when the infernal duetto ceased as suddenly as it had begun, and in the silence which fell once more upon the wood I heard the long blast of a woodman's horn.

A moment afterwards I was startled by an eerie rattle just above my head, and, loo ing up, I saw that the wire which hauls the cradle had begun to move. Puzzled and a little bit scared by this sign of human agency in a spot where I believed myself to be alone, I glanced along the cable on the chance of picking up some clue to what was happening in the dark mazes of the wood. And there below me I beheld an apparition which I shall never forget until my dying day.

Out of the pine-tops, out of a sea of fire, slowly rose a human figure dressed in white and black.

I would have known her a hundred miles away—Esterdine ! But was it Esterdine or was it her spirit ? Slowly, wearily, she rose until she was visible to her knees. Her head was bare, and her long, dishevelled hair streamed out upon the wind. Was she standing in the tree-tops ? Impossible ! Was she floating in air ?

As I watched, astounded and aghast, dreading to see her swallowed up in fiery death, she raised her arms before her and stretched them wide to the smoke-laden sky as though in supplication.

" God give me wings ! " I groaned, and I leapt towards the wood, intending to follow along under the cable, if that were possible, until I reached her—her, or her poor, charred body.

As I leapt, a shadow moved beside me. I ducked involuntarily, and over my head, and within a yard of it, came gliding the log which I had seen suspended to the cradle when I came up the mountain-side.

On the impulse of the moment—my brain, I am sure, was half-distraught—I took three running strides after the dangling log and jumped for it.

With one hand I caught the chain which slung it to the cradle—another inch and I should have missed it, the ground dropped so sharply—then I brought up the other hand and got a double grip. A pine branch brushed my legs and almost knocked me off, but in another moment I was clear in mid-air and the wood was falling away beneath me.

I HAVE a fair head for mountain heights, but this was quite another thing. Deadly sickness came over me ; my eyes went blind, all the strength drained out of my muscles in a moment, and I felt that I must drop, whatever was below. Then the picture of Esterdine flashed back into my mind, and what I can only liken to the savage rage of an animal at bay possessed me. I clenched my teeth, and with every atom of my will gripped the rusty iron chains as though I would crush them in my hands.

The sickness passed. I opened my eyes and nearly lost my hold again through sheer astonishment and joy, for there, a dozen yards away, was Esterdine herself.

She stood on a barren peak of rock which rose out of a dip in the wood to the level of the pine-tops ; on three sides the ground dropped sheer, but the fourth side was a gradual incline, up which she must have fled for safety. Farther down the incline, the wood was an inferno of fire.

Calm and still she stood, with her face to the flames and her hands clasped behind her, while the speeding smoke made a majestic canopy above her head.

" Esterdine ! " I shouted. " Esterdine ! "

She did not turn, but unclasped her hands and pressed them to her eyes.

" Esterdine ! " I cried, almost in her ear.

This time she started, but before she could look round I was close upon her.

The only thought that had possessed my mind all along had been to get to her as quickly as possible, and then to stand with her and, if it should so propitiously befall, defend her from any danger that might threaten.

Now, in my excitement and gladness, I loosened my hold on the chain and prepared to drop on to the ground beside her. But at that instant, by God's mercy, I saw the

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Out of the pine-tops, out of a sea of fire, slowly rose a human figure.

folly of doing any such thing, for the pinnacle where she was standing was hemmed in by fire and precipice; it was an absolute death-trap.

In a moment of crisis, when body and brain are at the utmost stretch, a man will often do things automatically which in his normal state he would never dream of attempting. So I think it was with me.

I let go the chain with my right hand and, dropping to the full length of my left arm, swooped down and seized her by the sash and swept her off her feet.

The strain was horrible; my arms were

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well-nigh torn from their sockets. Luckily she was light, or I never could have held her; but the forward movement helped us, and with a desperate heave I swung her up until she could get her hands upon the log. Then I shifted my hold from her sash to her waist, and, with my right arm tight about her, grasped the chain again.

I was too breathless to speak, but it flashed through my mind that, with her beside me, I would gladly face the horrors of the pit. She turned her head and looked into my eyes; she was deadly pale, but her sensitive mouth curved into the beginning of a smile and her lips moved towards me. If my next moment had been death, I should have died rejoicing and triumphant.

AND indeed death was nearer to us than I knew. Slowly, inexorably as fate, the cable carried us towards the zone of fire. From our higher altitude we looked down upon a lake of raging flame, and we were plunging into it. Beyond, I knew, was the cool green forest, peaceful garden lands, and the blessed imperturbable sea, but could human flesh ever last through that consuming fiery belt?

A blast of heat struck us full in the face. I tightened my encircling arm and she, understanding, covered her face as well as she could against my chest. I was thankful that she did so, for it saved her from a spectacle as horrible as ever affronted the sight of man.

During these few tense seconds the inclined ground, over the summit of which the cable had mercifully passed, had dropped away beneath us; in another moment we should be in the tree-tops again and over the burning wood. A little while, perhaps a few instants, would then decide whether we were doomed to stifled, scorching, tortured death, or to win through to safety and life.

I bowed my head over Esterdine, my face against her hair—it was the last protection I could give her—and in my heart I prayed for strength to hold her fast. I braced my will and muscles to the utmost.

It was well that I was prepared. A frightful yell—half-scream, half-bellow; half-human and half-bestial—came hurling at me out of the very vortex of the humming, hissing, crackling fire. I felt Esterdine shudder and go altogether limp, and in the tree in front of me, directly in our path, I saw a figure which, but for its clothing, I would have taken for some gruesome simian monster. Its hands and face were smeared and blackened with smoke, its features were contorted with an indescribable ferocity of passion, and its eyes glowed with the blood-shot light of a beast of prey.

How he got there alive I cannot think. The trunk on which he crouched had been lopped by the foresters to clear a passage for the cradle, and its flat surface gave him a footing, while he kept his balance by grasping the surrounding boughs; but the tree had already caught fire, and flames were licking round his feet.

As we passed over him he stood up straight, flung up his hands, and seized the chain on the side opposite to us.

The log lurched and rolled; but Beltony, clinging with one hand like a monkey, whipped out a dagger from the bosom of his shirt and struck furiously at me across the log.

There was no time to avoid the blow, even if my position had permitted it, but as the dagger came whirling down I moved my head aside instinctively. He missed my face, but the sharp edge of the dagger slashed my left shoulder, and his fist, gripped round the haft, struck me on the collar-bone and all but flung me from the log. The point of the dagger buried itself in the wood.

With frenzied strength he tore it out and flung up his hand to strike again. This time I could not hope to escape, and if I fell Esterdine would surely suffer awful death by dagger or by fire. Yet I was helpless to act. She was unconscious now, and I dared not loosen my grip.

The dagger was already falling when the animal which lives deep down in most of us surged up in me and, hauling myself up with desperate force until my teeth were level with his left hand, I bit into it with all the power of my jaws.

A savage thing to do? Bah! At that moment, to save the woman at my side, I would have gnawed his body piecemeal.

He screamed with pain, dashed down his dagger hand on to the log—instead of on to me—then snatched away his bitten left. So now he was hanging with both hands on the log and his legs dangling below. In that position he could not strike.

But his fury was not spent, and the malice of the fiend was in the glance he shot at me. His fingers tightened on the timber, and I saw his muscles stiffening for an upward spring.

Then I felt a jar that brought my heart into my mouth. A shower of red sparks flew up from beneath, Beltony's chest thumped against my feet, his hands shot off the rounded surface of the log, and he was gone! His heels had struck against the trees.

Looking down, I saw him turn over and crash head foremost into the heart of a blazing fir.

Then I must have gone into a partial swoon. I was not wholly unconscious, because I knew that a racking agony of heat was searing the very core and marrow of my brain. Then I came to the threshold of

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Beltony's hands shot off the rounded surface of the log, and he was gone! Looking down,

Nothingness, and within I heard a cool whispering of peace ineffable. Yet I would not enter, because I felt—I knew—that Esterdine was close beside me, waiting, watching. It was a test—that also I knew—and all the torments of hell should not make me fail!

After an infinity of time my agony slipped away; a heavenly coolness laved me and I was groping towards my ordinary self. My aching head was resting on a soft and odorous pillow—it was Esterdine's hair. Thank Heaven! my arm was tight around her still. I opened my eyes, and we were gliding serenely down over a waving olive-garden. The air was sweet and clear.

Presently the cradle stopped, and I was looking into the pale, scared, sweating face of a rough-clad countryman. With his

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I saw him crash head foremost into the heart of a blazing fir.

hands still on the crank handle with which he had wound us down, he stared from one to the other and back again; then he grunted out a strange ejaculation, picked up his coat, and made off. I shouted after him, but my voice was dry and cracked and he took no notice, but dropped over a bank and disappeared.

My hands and limbs were stiff and numb, and I staggered like a drunken man, but I managed to lift Esterdine off the log and lay her gently on the parched turf. I cooled her brow with water from a tank in the neighbouring olive-garden, and in a little while her blue eyes opened and looked into mine. Soon her inborn pluck prevailed and she sat up, straightening out the charred tatters of her skirt and smiling at me. Yet I saw from her wan, drawn face that she was in pain.

She tried to walk but could not, so I took her up in my arms and carried her through the deserted gardens to the shore road. In the dusk as I walked, with her cheek on my shoulder and her hair against my neck, she told me as well as she could what had happened in the forest.

"He broke off some cones for me and took them down to the mules. And when he came back he—made love to me."

Poor, shaken darling, I felt her sob; her tears were dropping on my hand. I pressed her closer, and presently she steadied herself and went on:—

"And when I wouldn't—promise to marry him, he got angry all of a sudden and shouted at me that I must die. He was mad—mad. It was dreadful! I tried to stop my ears, but he tore my hands away. Of course, it wasn't really Cousin Charles—it was a devil!" Her voice dropped to an awed whisper. "He set fire to the forest, to burn me to death! He said he would escape himself—and get all father's money. Then—he drove me up that slope and ran back into the smoke. I prayed, and then you called. Oh! I thought it couldn't really be you. Hold me—hold me fast——"

She was sobbing again. I soothed her as well as I could, and presently I heard a little sigh, and her gentle breathing told me she was asleep.

Next day I found Céline, the woman of the Corniche road. She was heart-broken

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when I told her of Beltony's death—she had loved him. From her I learned that he was a hopeless gambler and had brought himself to utter ruin. He had seen the terms of Richard Beltony's will in the newspapers, and had noted the provision that if the testator and his daughter died without male issue the bulk of the money should go to the nearest relative who bore the name of Beltony. This, he knew, was himself.

The relief from all his embarrassments which such a contingency would afford became his obsession, and when he heard that Esterdine was on the Coast he conceived his ghastly plot to marry, or, failing that, to destroy, the woman who stood between him and the wealth he coveted.

Some days later, when the smouldering forest had cooled sufficiently, I went up the mountain with the *garde champêtre*. We found Beltony huddled at the foot of what had been a mighty tree, a real monarch of the forest, and as we lifted his body to lay it on the rough litter of branches that the peasants had prepared I saw beneath it the charred butt of a giant fir-cone. The tree which he had used to lure another to her doom had sent him to his own.

When at last we found the woodman—he had been in hiding—he confessed, under the gentle persuasion of the *garde*, that Beltony had paid him fifty francs for his help. His part had been to wait by his windlass until he heard the signal horn, and then to bring down as quickly as he could the cradle by which Beltony intended to escape. He imagined that it was a mere escapade, and had no idea that he was to participate in a crime. Furthermore, he had not recovered his horn, which he valued at seven francs fifty.

Considering that, but for him, Esterdine would surely have been burnt to death, I induced the police to let the matter drop by urging the point, which they were quick to appreciate, that publicity in such a case would in no wise enhance the reputation of the Coast as a peaceful resort for invalids and pleasure-seekers. I also compensated the woodman liberally for the loss of his horn, while my Esterdine has insisted on making full provision for Céline.

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 107.

(The Third of the Series.)

LOVE in a forest, heroines disguised,
By Stratford's famous son immortalized.

1. Within the Zodiac the ram is fixed.
2. A man, of three; one fish, another mixed.
3. King, mourned by poet, loses tail and head.
4. From city, bark, or toil one fourth has fled.
5. Now should the very last of all appear.
6. See fifty sheep. And hundreds more are near.
7. So can we march. Part of the foot we see.
8. Here, captain, boil the water for our tea.
9. No quadruped, though such his name implies.
10. Muscles or brains he hates to exercise.
11. Take creature, county, and fair heroine,
Six-lettered each, halve, add: our word is seen.

PAX.

Answers to Acrostic No. 107 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on June 9th.*

To every light one alternative answer may be sent; it should be written at the side. At the foot of his answer every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 106.

(The Second of the Series.)

HE stands for England: on his day
Her greatest came and passed away.

1. The goal of those who would succeed.
2. The basis of the Moslem's creed.
3. The grip that floors you like a shot.
4. The angle mangled by the Scot.
5. The place where mummers play their parts.
6. The gift supreme in all the arts.
7. The inmate of a changeless skin.
8. The prelude to symphonic din.
9. The trappings of the royal power.
10. The magic of a witching hour.
11. The world-wide realm that joins to sing
With heart and voice: "God save the King!"

EDI.

1.	S	ucces	S
2.	A	lla	H
3.	I	nfluenz	A
4.	N	eu	K
5.	T	heatr	E
6.	G	eniu	S
7.	E	thio	P
8.	O	vertur	E
9.	R	egali	A
10.	G	lamou	R
11.	E	mpir	E

For the seventh light of No. 104 "Aurangab(ad)" is admitted as correct. No other suggestion fulfils the necessary conditions of being at the same time four little words and less than one word.

NINETEENTH SERIES: RESULT.

Fourteen solvers answered the four acrostics correctly, and will share the prizes, each one receiving eighteen shillings. They will also be ineligible for prizes in the twentieth series, now running. They are: Assam, Mr. Gordon Plater, 15, Claremont Road, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex; Cam, Mr. G. Roper, 5, Regent Street, Cambridge; Darnlinvarach, Major K. M. Drummond, Falcon Lodge, Putney, S.W.15; Dun, Mr. D. G. Robertson, Torrie, Newbury, Berks; Enos, Mr. W. S. Cool, 3, St. James's Square, Pall Mall, S.W.1; Gosea, Mrs. G. Goulding, 59, Seaton Street, S.W.10; Grilse, Miss E. M. Salmon, Sunnydene, Abbotsham Road, Bideford, N. Devon; Junius, Mr. F. C. W. Grigson, Amesbury, Hindhead; Lobo, Mrs. L. Morris, 74, Larch Road, Cricklewood, N.W.2; Omeleg, Mr. G. L. Moore, 58, Rosebery Road, Muswell Hill, N.10; Pompey, Mr. J. R. Mooney, 11, Cliveden Road, Wimbledon, S.W.19; Roy, Mr. A. C. Woodhouse, 3, Cambalt Road, Putney Hill, S.W.; Slugo, Mr. J. J. Holloway, Tyndale, Howard Road, New Malden, Surrey; Wals, Mr. W. Stradling, 12, Bardwell Road, Oxford.

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A LESSON IN LAWN TENNIS

BY A.E. BEAMISH

(The Davis Cup International, and celebrated Lawn Tennis Coach at Roehampton).

Illustrated with Photographs of the Author, specially taken for this article.

SPEAKING generally, as an instructor, the faults most noticeable in the average beginner are those brought about by the very facility with which the game is played at first, and the more or less instant success of the player in his early efforts. His instinct, his first and principal guide when he began, has led him to hit the ball by means of a short, quick blow of the arm, instead of a swing from the shoulder, which should be used in making nearly every shot. He also probably holds his racket with a faulty grip, which compels him to make the stroke close to, instead of away from, his body. This cramps his movements and causes his arm to remain quite close to his side as he makes his stroke.



CORRECT POSITION.

Forehand drive at moment of striking the ball.

In this connection one should always remember the late A. F. Wilding's advice to beginners: "Get away from the ball, and even miss it by being too far from it, rather than too near it. You can't do worse than miss the shot, and the one position is as bad as the other."

Through this fault also, the beginner loses a great deal of power through not being able to put his weight into the stroke.

In ninety-nine cases out of one hundred, his feet are close together and his body is facing square to the net, as he prepares to hit the ball. These two faults cause him, in the first instance, to lose his balance as his racket is swung back for the stroke, and in the second to take way all chance of his putting his weight into the blow, when he does hit the ball.

The body is sure to fall backwards, away from the direction of the shot, as the racket meets the ball, on the principle of recoil after a shock.



INCORRECT POSITION.

Since the feet are not separated there is no means of saving the body's balance. When the racket meets the ball, and the body falls in a backward direction away from the shock, the power which might have been imparted to the stroke is expended in the opposite direction.

The beginner's usual drive is a spasmodic hit, made at lightning speed with the feet quite close together, and with the body falling backwards as the ball is struck. The stroke thus played comprises as perfect a trinity of faults as any which

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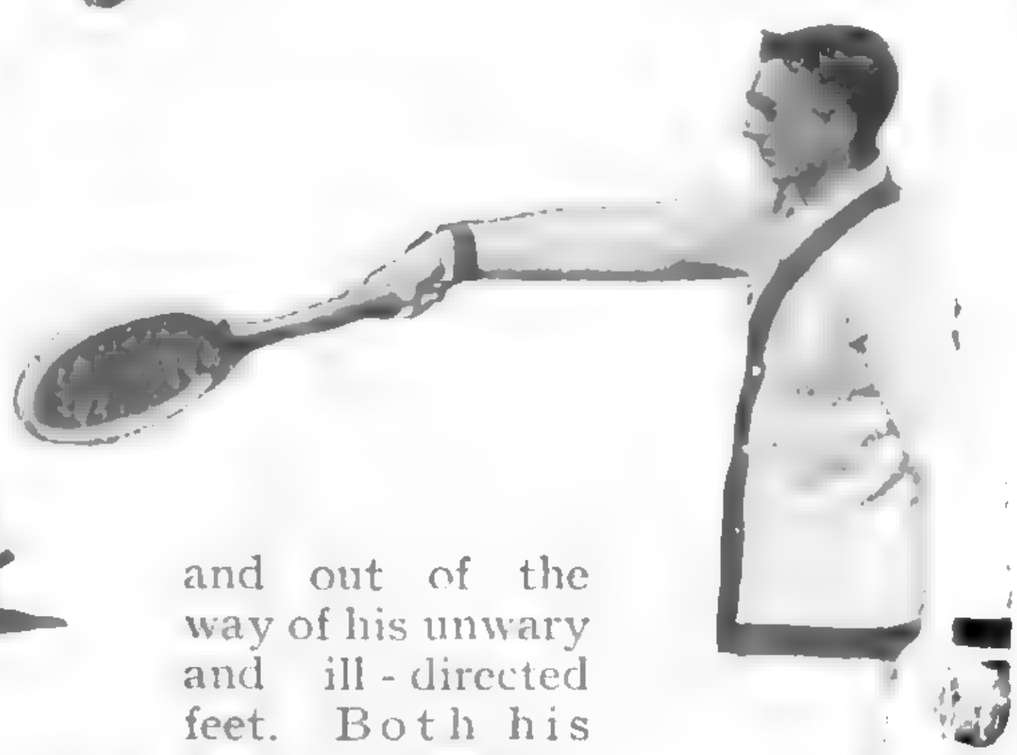
the untaught player can possibly perpetrate. Its results are often as varied as they are unexpected, since the ball is just as likely to clear the stop netting as it is to find the bottom of the net. Sometimes when its user is playing very well he brings off two or three in as many games, and of course scores outright. At others he finds the net, or hits out of the ground, and merely attributes his lack of success to being out of form on the day!

If the hopeful beginner's strokes off the ground are not "things of beauty," and his backhand shot is only less violent than his forehand drive, because he simply can't hit the ball hard across his body owing to the perverse way in which the joints of his arm work, his overhead shots and service are truly "wonderfully and fearfully made." You see him ready to serve literally on the base-line, since at least one foot is always touching it. Beside him, to make things more difficult, are always to be seen at least a couple of balls, which of course should be well outside the court, and out of the way of his unwary and ill-directed feet. Both his feet are together, his body facing square to the net (one of the unforgivable sins of the game), and his racket is held in the grip called the "hammer hold," better adapted for hitting nails than tennis balls, and his elbow is kept close to his side from beginning to end of the performance of delivering the service.



CORRECT POSITION.

Forehand drive at finish of stroke, showing follow-through of the racket.



INCORRECT POSITION.

This shows lack of follow-through of the racket, and generally bad position of feet and body, and faulty grip of the racket.

To do this he throws up the ball only a little above his right ear, and hits it at about the level of the top of his head by means of a kind of forearm punch, which may, or may not, possess any power, according to the amount of exercises that he has indulged in previously, or the nature of the other games he has played in his youth. The results are not by any means proportionate to the amount of energy expended, and should warrant the immediate scrapping of the methods producing them in favour of something far more powerful if less naturally acquired.



CORRECT POSITION.

Backhand drive at beginning of the swing-back of the racket.



INCORRECT POSITION.

This shows total lack of swing-back of the racket, wrong grip, feet wrongly placed, and stroke taken too near the body.

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Backhand drive at finish of the stroke, showing good follow-through of the racket.

CORRECT POSITION.

In all these cases, however, the movements of the player's racket arm, even if they follow the line of least resistance, are yet productive of a fundamentally incorrect style, and so should always be discouraged. After all, style is only the means of producing a stroke whereby the biggest margin for error, in the event of a miscalculation or mistake, is assured to the player. It is a kind of stroke insurance policy against accidents or unforeseen happenings, and other things being equal should give to the man who possesses it the verdict over his less correct opponent, in a close match.

In this connection the play of ladies in the beginner stage is remarkable for either the extremely superficial imitation of "stylish models," or a rather futile method of hitting the ball, which is mainly caused through their inferior strength.

But even when the lady beginner can play a little, she merely "flatters to deceive." She swings back her racket for the stroke most bravely, makes the stroke itself with diffidence, and follows through with her racket as though the joint of her wrist were dislocated by the impact of racket and ball.

She finds the movements of the sweeping shot from the shoulder and of the extended arm difficult to understand and harder still to execute.

Although her shots as a rule are well controlled, her wrist is the unruly member and continually lets her down. It is either so exuberantly used that the stroke becomes too slashing and uncertain, or else it is quite incapable of supporting the head of the racket correctly, and cannot take up the shock of the impact of racket and ball, and collapses completely. The result that follows is a slack



INCORRECT POSITION.

This shows bad follow-through, bad grip of the racket, feet and body wrongly placed, shoulders wrongly used.

CORRECT POSITION.

Serve — beginning of stroke before ball is thrown up.

INCORRECT POSITION.

Showing beginner's "hammer hold" serve and generally cramped position.

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kind of scoop shot with no power or control.

Strength apart, it is in the mental qualities as displayed in the playing of the game that women generally are so far inferior to the average players of the other sex.

One sees indecision so often shown in the failure of a woman player to move forward quickly to turn a high shot into a smash, or to poach more frequently in a ladies' double. Again. the inability to understand the effect of her opponent's screw, or heavily-cut, shot, and judge the direction of the ball's consequent deflection, appears far more marked amongst ladies, and is probably one of the disadvantages, on the point of disappearing in these days, of the lack of training at other games in her young days at school.

Most of all, though, the beginner is apt to be very flurried and breathless in all her movements. This spoils her shots and agitates her mind. The writer remarked on the punctuality of a lady pupil, who, although a lady of many interests and occupations, yet always managed to be in good time for all her lessons. She said she made a point of always being punctual, as it calmed her mind for the game, to feel that there was no need for hurry to get to the court.

How many women, or men for that matter, would not benefit by following this excellent plan ?

" Festina lente " is a motto which, from Mlle. Lenglen to the veriest beginner, cannot be too strongly or frequently insisted upon, since the essential point of all good play, as its opposite marks the poor effort, lies in the value of " hurrying slowly," or of always being in time for every shot.



CORRECT POSITION.

Waiting to receive service — tense and alert.



INCORRECT POSITION.

Showing body slack and inert, with knees bent, feet flat, and racket wrongly held. The beginner at his worst, when he takes service.



CORRECT POSITION.

Waiting to volley at net—tense, and with racket ready for any shot.



INCORRECT POSITION.

Beginner, with foot touching net, racket actually over it, and body much too close to it to make any shot correctly.

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THE SINISTER QUEST OF NORMAN GREYES

by

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

No. 7.—SEVEN BOXES OF GOLD.

By MICHAEL.

I WAS at St. Pancras Station to meet Gorty and Metzger on their arrival in England. I saw the seven black tin boxes with brass clamps handed out of the guard's van and placed on the roof of a taxicab. I knew as though it were foredoomed that the contents of those boxes would be mine before the week was out. I felt certain, too, that one at least of the two men would fight to the death before I obtained possession of them. They were well worth it, however.

It was a foggy night, and I lingered with perfect safety on the outskirts of the little throng of people who had come to greet these two men. They were a rough lot, on the whole—democrats of the lowest type, swarthy and unclean. I saw hungry glances directed towards those black boxes, and I knew that, given sufficient cunning and address, I should not be the first by a long way to strike a blow for their acquisition. But of these others I had no fear. Gorty and Metzger knew their friends, knew them well enough not to trust them.

I walked back through the fog to my humble little flat in Adam Street. Those were gloomy days, even for me who cared little about the physical comforts of life. I was passing as Mr. Arthur Younghusband, LL.D., a cousin of the well-known solicitor of Lincoln's Inn, in town to consult works of reference at the British Museum. Day by day I walked to that gloomy mausoleum of dead knowledge, spent an hour or so there, and back to my rooms. No one dogged my footsteps. By devious ways I had shaken off all pursuit and suspicion. Yet life was a wearisome thing. I am not a man with many human weaknesses, but I should have welcomed a visit from Janet —a little dinner, perhaps, at the Café Royal, a peep into the world of many-coloured pleasures outside of which my path lay. These things, however, I knew were not for me. Janet was watched, as I knew beyond a doubt, and even if she were not, she had failed me in my last demand. Janet presented a problem presently to be solved.

On the third day after the arrival of Gorty and Metzger I visited my solicitors, Messrs. Younghusband, Nicholson, and Younghusband, at Lincoln's Inn. My reputed cousin accorded me an interview within a few minutes of my arrival. We spoke for a time of my studies and their progress. Then there was a pause. The door was closed, the walls of the room were thick.

"Things progress?" I demanded, leaning across his wide, untidy table.

Mr. Younghusband smiled benevolently. In these moments of direct speech I was accustomed to forget my assumed personality and to speak with all the quick incisiveness that was natural to me. My legal adviser, however, never altered his manner of reply or deportment. He was always the same—unctuous, legal, courtly.

"Your affairs are in excellent train," he assured me. "Of the two people in whom we are interested, one leaves, as we have surmised, for Manchester to-night; the other remains alone."

"They have made no arrangement with any bank yet?"

My companion shook his head.

"They are both, in the circumstances, suspicious," he said. "Their position, of course, is—er—peculiar. They are the custodians of a hundred thousand pounds in

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gold, with which they hope to establish a few private credits in this country. On the other hand, the country to which they belong owes us something like a hundred times that amount. They have a somewhat natural fear that any bank with whom they might deposit their treasure might be disposed to hand it over to the Government, or that the Government, by some legal means, might attach it."

"Therefore," I observed, "it remains in their rooms?"

"Precisely! They consider it the lesser risk."

"And Gorty goes to Manchester to-night?"

"That is so," the lawyer murmured.

"So far all seems well," I said. "The great thing is that the gold has not been removed and that Metzger will be alone. There were other little details?"

Just so!" Mr. Younghusband assented, leaning back in his chair, with his finger-tips pressed together. "So far as regards the setting of the affair, I think you will find it in order. Metzger and Gorty occupy suite number eighty-nine at the Milan Hotel, which suite consists, as you know, of two bedrooms, a bathroom, and a sitting-room. The sitting-room is on the extreme right-hand side of the suite, and the gold is kept in Metzger's bedroom, which opens from the sitting-room. The bath-room is between the two bedrooms."

"I have had the plan," I interrupted, a little impatiently.

Mr. Younghusband declined to be hurried. He had the air of giving difficult legal advice on a technical point.

"Suite number ninety," he continued, "consists of a bedroom, bath-room, and sitting-room only, and is occupied by Mr. and Mrs. José di Miguel, very rich South Americans. They are leaving to-night by motor-car for Southampton to catch the steamer there for Buenos Ayres in the morning."

"Their luggage is already packed?" I asked.



"You may kiss me," she The rest was easy, for it cord a little

"Already packed," Mr. Younghusband agreed. "The porters have commented upon its weight."

"And Madame?"

"Appears to have fulfilled her task," was the somewhat hesitating answer.

I detected signs of uneasiness in my companion's speech, and I questioned him about it promptly.

"Have you doubts of the woman?" I asked.

"None whatever," Mr. Younghusband

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whispered. Metzger bent towards her. was a trick I knew well. I tightened the and the deed was done.

assured me, blandly. "At the same time, she is, without a doubt, the weakest link in the chain. She has temperament enough—Metzger seems to have been an easy victim; but I should have had more confidence in the lady who visited me the other day."

"I can no longer put complete faith in my wife," I replied, coldly.

Mr. Younghusband was startled out of his dignified serenity of manner. He leaned across the table.

"What do you mean by that?" he demanded, harshly. "Do you know that she has been here, the one place in London you should have kept her away from if you had any doubts?"

"I have no doubts whatever as to her fidelity," I declared. "You know what I mean when I say that, in the parlance of our friends, she has gone soft. It is a pity."

Mr. Younghusband seemed relieved but puzzled.

"A woman who could do what she did on the golf links at Woking," he murmured, reminiscently, "must have changed very much if she merits your present criticism."

The subject was not a pleasant one to me. I abandoned it.

"In any case," I reminded him, "she is in touch with Greyes, and he knows too much."

"Wonderful capacity for existence, that man," Mr. Younghusband remarked, suavely.

I am not a lover of harsh deeds. I seldom go out of my way to kill, or allow my subordinates to do so, if my ends can be obtained otherwise. At that moment, however, I felt a sudden resurgence into my brain of that one bloodthirsty desire of my life.

"As soon as this affair is safely concluded," I said, "and we are in funds again, I shall deal with Norman Greyes myself."

"It occurs to me that you would be well-advised," my companion acquiesced. "The person in question possesses the one gift

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which might make him dangerous to us. He has imagination."

I nodded. I was tracing figures upon the blotting-paper, debating with myself different methods of dealing with Norman Greyes.

"Every channel which might lead to the firm of Younghusband, Nicholson, and Younghusband," the lawyer continued, meditatively, "seems, so far as human ingenuity could arrage it, permanently blocked, but a man with imagination who is not afraid to work on guesswork is always to be feared."

"It will not be my fault," I promised, as I took my leave, "if you have any cause to fear Norman Greyes after the next month or so."

THAT night, in the language of those forgotten war communiqués, everything happened according to plan. At a quarter to nine, Metzger, who was writing alone in his sitting-room, heard a soft knocking at the door which communicated with the adjoining suite. He rose promptly to his feet, locked the outside door of his own rooms, and softly withdrew the bolt. He stood there with an inviting smile upon his ugly face. Mme. di Miguel laid a cautioning finger upon her somewhat over-painted lips, as she stole over the threshold.

"There is one hour that my husband will be away," she whispered, gliding past him. "You may kiss me."

Metzger bent towards her. I moved noiselessly, but I think he would not have heard me if I had worn hobnailed boots. The rest was easy, for it was a trick I knew well. He collapsed with scarcely a gasp. I tightened the cord a little and the deed was done.

By NORMAN GREYES.

IT was entirely by accident that I had dined that night in the grill-room of the Milan Hotel with Rimmington. He had asked me for an interview that afternoon over the telephone, and, being disengaged, I had suggested a little dinner at my club. We had arrived there to find the place packed and the best tables full. Sooner than wait, we had strolled down to the Milan, and at a corner table there enjoyed a comfortable meal. Rimmington was in the act of disclosing his reason for wishing to see me, when the manager, who was an old acquaintance of mine, stopped short on his hurried way through the room and came across to us.

"I wonder whether you would mind coming upstairs with me for a moment, Sir Norman," he begged, "and you, too, Mr. Rimmington? I have just been sent for. Something seems wrong in one of the suites."

We rose without hesitation and followed him out of the room, into the lift, and up to the sixth floor. When we stepped out, several of the servants were gathered together at the farther end of the corridor. The manager embarked upon a word or two of explanation.

"There may be nothing wrong at all," he said. "This is just the position as it has been reported to me. Suite number eighty-nine was taken some days ago by Metzger and Gorty, the two emissaries from our Eastern friends. They brought over some gold, as you know, in tin boxes, and, greatly against my advice, they had it stored in their rooms. Gorty went to Manchester last night, leaving Metzger alone. Our telephone operator reported that he refused to answer the telephone about half an hour ago. We sent up to his room and found it bolted on the inside. We rang and knocked without the slightest result. Finally we entered the suite through the adjoining room, which had just been vacated, and found that, although the outer door was bolted on the inside, the suite was empty. Further, the tin boxes of gold had gone."

"Interesting," Rimmington murmured, "very!"

The manager led us along the corridor, through an empty bedroom which showed signs of recent vacation, into the suite which had been allotted to Messrs. Metzger and Gorty. It had a habitable air, newspapers and magazines lay about, whisky and soda and a bottle of liqueur stood upon the sideboard. There were no signs of any trouble or disturbance of any sort. We walked through the sitting-room, the two bedrooms, and the bath-room, and the floor-waiter, who had now joined us, showed where the boxes had been stacked.

"Is there any reason to suppose," I asked, "that this man Metzger has not taken away the gold himself?"

"In that case," the manager pointed out, "someone would have had to carry the cases downstairs. No one has done so. No one has seen Metzger leave the place."

"We are to presume, then," I observed, "that he is still in the hotel?"

"Precisely!"

"You have had him searched for?"

"Half-a-dozen men have searched every corner of the place, from the bars to the private rooms. Furthermore, no one in the hotel has even caught a glimpse of him."

I went through the rooms again. When I came to the bedroom adjoining the sitting-room, which the floor-waiter told me was Metzger's, I noticed that the wardrobe was locked. Not only that, but there was a slight strain being exercised against the lock, bending the panel slightly. For the first time I began to look upon the matter as serious.

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I was just in time to catch in my arms a crumpled mass of clothes and humanity.

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"This door must be broken open quickly," I insisted, "or a spare key found."

The key from the wardrobe in Gorty's room was tried with success. As it was turned, the door flew open. I was just in time to catch in my arms a crumpled mass of clothes and humanity. With a blackened face and protuberant eyes, his tongue lolling out on one side and a little froth at the corners of his mouth, it was still not difficult to recognize from his pictures the man who had refused to answer the telephone.

"My God!" Rimmington exclaimed. "He's dead!"

"He's very near it," I replied, loosening the slip-knot of whipcord from around his neck. "Send for a doctor at once, and, Rimmington, you had better ring up the Yard and get to work quickly."

Rimmington at that moment justified my confidence in him. He wasted no time in exclamations or idle questions. He pointed to the door of the room through which we had entered.

"How long ago did those people leave," he asked, "and what luggage did they take with them?"

"They left an hour ago," the floor-waiter answered. "They had two very heavy trunks."

"The affair appears to solve itself," Rimmington muttered, after he had spoken a few hasty words down the telephone.

The floor-waiter, who was an intelligent fellow, followed us into the other room, to which we had withdrawn on the arrival of the doctor.

"There is one thing I ought to tell you, sir," he said. "The porters tried to move those trunks several hours ago, while Mr. Metzger was busy writing in his room. They were too heavy then—and at that time the tin cases were still in Mr. Gorty's room."

"You are sure of that?" Rimmington asked.

"Absolutely, sir."

Rimmington looked around. I could see that the same thought had occurred to him as to me. The briefest of searches confirmed our suspicions. The wardrobe was filled with lumps of heavy stone.

"There is only one point now remaining to be solved," I observed, "and that is, did these two, Mr. and Mrs. José di Miguel, carry out this little affair entirely alone, or had they accomplices?"

"They had a visitor about an hour before they left, sir," the floor-waiter told us.

Rimmington took out his notebook.

"Description, please," he begged.

"I scarcely saw the gentleman myself, sir," the man replied. "He seemed quite ordinary-looking. He wore glasses, and his hair was grey."

"Well," Rimmington said, as we descended to the ground-floor to meet the men whom he had summoned from Scotland Yard, "we get it in the neck sometimes about our failures. This time, if we don't get hold of Di Miguel and his heavy trunks, I should think we deserve all the censure we get."

"Nothing in it for me, I'm afraid," I remarked, as I bade him good-night.

"It doesn't look like it," he admitted. "However, one never knows."

IT was the unexpected which happened. Although Mr. José di Miguel and his wife could have had barely an hour's start, and were handicapped by the possession of two trunks of enormous weight, a week passed without any news of their arrest or of the recovery of any part of the gold. Metzger remained in a state of partial unconsciousness and could give no coherent account of what had happened. Gorty returned from Manchester and behaved like a madman. He spent his time between Downing Street, where he boldly accused the Government of having taken the gold, and Scotland Yard, where he expressed his opinion of the English police system in terms which made him, to say the least of it, unpopular there. In the beginning the whole affair had seemed so simple. Mr. and Mrs. di Miguel, distributing gratuities in most lavish fashion, had driven calmly away from the Milan at the appointed hour, and had arrived at Waterloo in ample time for the train which they had planned to take to Southampton. When that train arrived at Southampton, however, there was no one in it in the least answering to their description, neither had any rooms been taken in the hotel, nor passages booked on the steamer. Curiously enough, too, none of the porters could remember handling any particularly heavy luggage for that train, or attending upon any passengers answering to the description of the two missing people, yet the man who drove the hotel bus to the station—an old servant and a man of excellent character—gave unfaltering evidence as to his having driven there, and having left his two passengers waiting on the pavement whilst a porter went for a barrow.

I kept away from Rimmington for some time, for I thoroughly sympathized with his position. On the tenth day, however, he came to see me.

"Not so simple as we thought," he remarked, as he accepted a cigar and an easy-chair.

"Apparently not," I assented. "What about the bus driver?"

"He's been with the hotel company for seventeen years," Rimmington replied, "has a wife and children, and an excellent

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character. Besides, a score of people saw the bus in the station yard."

"And the man who visited them at the hotel at the last moment?"

"We're offering a hundred pounds reward for his discovery. Here's his description."

I read the typewritten sheet which Rimmington pushed across to me, and returned it in silence.

"Suggest anything to you?" my visitor asked.

"The description might apply to thousands," I answered, a little evasively.

Rimmington stared gloomily into the fire.

"It might," he admitted. "Do you know who I think it was?"

"No idea," I answered, mendaciously.

"Your friend—Pugsley—Stanfield—or to go behind all his aliases and call him by his rightful name—Michael Sayers."

"Do you really believe that that man is in England?" I asked.

"I do," was the confident reply. "He was chased out of the States, we have granted an extradition warrant against him on the charge of manslaughter, we have watched every steamship at every port, yet I don't mind confessing to you that we have reason to believe that he is in London at the present moment and in touch with his old associates."

"If that is so," I declared, "I should imagine that the person who earns your hundred pounds will be able to solve the mystery of the disappearance of Mr. and Mrs. di Miguel."

NOTWITHSTANDING Rimmington's conviction, I started on no mad quest of my enemy. Indeed, I had no inspiration as to where to commence my search. Janet had left Albemarle Court and had not replied to the various notes which I had written her. I had a vague idea that there was danger in prosecuting inquiries for her too closely. I had an idea, too, which was by no means vague, that I was being watched. There was always a loiterer of some sort or another in the street when I entered or left my rooms. I felt surreptitious eyes upon me often, when I lunched or dined or visited the theatre. Once I walked home late through Lansdowne Passage, and heard the patter of rubber-shod feet behind me. I swung around, and my pursuer, whoever he was, a burly but agile figure, took refuge in flight. When I regained the entrance to the passage, he was nowhere to be seen. There were other and similar incidents. I had gone unarmed through the time of trouble in Ireland. I carried a revolver with me now, and I practised getting at it quickly.

It was about three weeks after the attack upon Metzger and the disappearance of the gold, when I received a most unexpected visitor. I heard a shrill, foreign voice in the hall overriding my servant's objections, and a moment later a man entered unannounced and evidently in a state of some excitement. He was small and of exceedingly unprepossessing appearance. His face was pitted with smallpox, he had wicked-looking teeth, a heavy black moustache, a head of black hair as thick and upright-growing as a porcupine's. He addressed me at once in broken English.

"You are Sir Norman Greyes?" he said. "I am Gorty. I came to this country of cut-throats with Metzger—with him who lies in the hospital. Will you listen to me?"

I motioned to Adams to leave us, and wheeled round an easy-chair for my visitor.

"Sit down," I invited. "I am glad to see you, Mr. Gorty, although I think you are a little hard upon us over here."

"What am I to think?" he demanded, fiercely. "I come from a great but a poor Government. With much trouble we get together the gold with which to buy materials in this country and open credits. It is you who are supposed to be more civilized than any other country. I go to Manchester to speak at a meeting. I come back, and what do I find? My comrade brutally assaulted, my country's gold stolen! Yes, and that in the heart of your London—in the centre of your civilization! What am I to think of you, then, as a people, I ask?"

"It was a most unusual crime," I told him, "but you must remember that you were taking grave risks in having a large amount of gold like that unguarded in your room. The police, however, are doing——"

"The police?" he almost shrieked. "Your police? They are imbeciles—imbeciles or rascals—I know not which! And as to having the money unguarded, how could we help it? There are many banks in London who say we owe them money. What would have happened if I had deposited my gold there? They would surely have annexed it. And as it is, do you believe that it is an ordinary thief who has robbed us? No! I say no! Or if it is a thief, it is one whom your precious police can lay their hands on when they choose, and when they do so, what will happen? The gold will be claimed by your Government."

"I am afraid," I said, "that you are taking a very extreme view of things. However, in the circumstances I cannot blame you for feeling ill-used. Tell me what brings you here."

"Ten years ago," he went on, suddenly calmer, "I was in the service of the police of my country. There was an anarchist plot.

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Three criminals escaped to London. You were at Scotland Yard and I came to see you. You found me those criminals."

"I remember it perfectly," I answered; "but you have changed your name."

"It was necessary," he admitted. "In my country one changes one's name frequently. But you I remembered. Mr. Rimmington spoke of you. I found your address. I am here."

"Tell me what to do for you?" I begged.

"Find me my gold," he demanded. "Find me the man who attacked Metzger."

"If I could do that," I told him, "I should have done it long ago. I am only too pleased when I can help the police in their duties."

He drew his easy-chair a little closer to mine. He eyed my box of cigarettes hungrily. I placed it by his side and handed him a match. He smoked furiously.

"Listen," he confided, "I have a piece of evidence. I will not take it to the police. I do not trust them. You shall find me my gold."

"What is your piece of evidence?" I asked.

"The little grey man," he answered, "the man whom they spoke of as visiting the South Americans in the next suite. Ah! those South Americans—I never trusted them! I saw Madame make eyes at Metzger. What need had she of Metzger! A woman like that has lovers enough."

"About the little grey man," I ventured.

"They speak of him in the evidence," Gorty went on, eagerly. "He was at the suite that night. I saw him with Madame the South American two days before. I know where he is to be found now."

"Why the devil haven't you told the police?" I exclaimed. "That is the one man they are looking for."

My visitor narrowly escaped a paroxysm. He swept an ornament from the table by his side without noticing it. He gibbered for a moment like a madman.

"But have I not explained?" he expostulated. "I do not trust the police. Six of those solemn constables would march up in uniform to the place I spoke of, and the little grey man would slip away. I tell you. You must find him and see who he is. You must consider how to act. The assault upon Metzger was bad, but it is the gold I want."

"Very well," I said; "tell me where to find him?"

"Go to the Reading Room at the British Museum between eleven and one o'clock," Gorty told me. "You will find him there, reading. I myself am a student. Twice I have sat at the next table. He is reading from some rare volumes the History of the Rosicrucians."

"Between eleven and one," I repeated.

"You will go?"

"To-morrow morning," I promised.

Gorty rose.

"Listen, Greyes," he said; "you, Sir Norman Greyes. Will you swear that if you recover my gold it comes to me?"

"I swear it," I answered.

"Then through that man you will find it," he declared.

GORTY was right. The moment when, from my place of concealment, I saw him come shuffling into the Reading Room and take his place near me, I knew very well that this was Michael. He carried with him two or three books, a volume of reference, and a notebook. He had the appearance of the most devout bibliophile, and indeed, having watched him for some time, I came to the conclusion that he was in earnest about his labours. It was in these little ways that Michael achieved real greatness. Detail was a passion with him. He not only appeared to be deeply interested in the Rosicrucian history — he had actually become so.

I was, without doubt, at fault not to have at once passed on my information to Rimmington and to have had my old adversary arrested on one of the many previous counts against him. It seemed to me, however, that this would bring to an end our chances of recovering the gold, and I could not ignore the fact that I was indebted to Gorty for the information which had delivered Michael into my hands. I therefore maintained a strict watch, and waited. For three days and three nights I knew Michael's every movement. He made his own breakfast, lunched at a small restaurant near the Museum, and dined each night at the Monico, where he sometimes played dominoes for an hour afterwards, if able to find an opponent. On the fourth night, however, he departed from his usual practices. The young woman whom I had been employing to watch him came to me in haste.

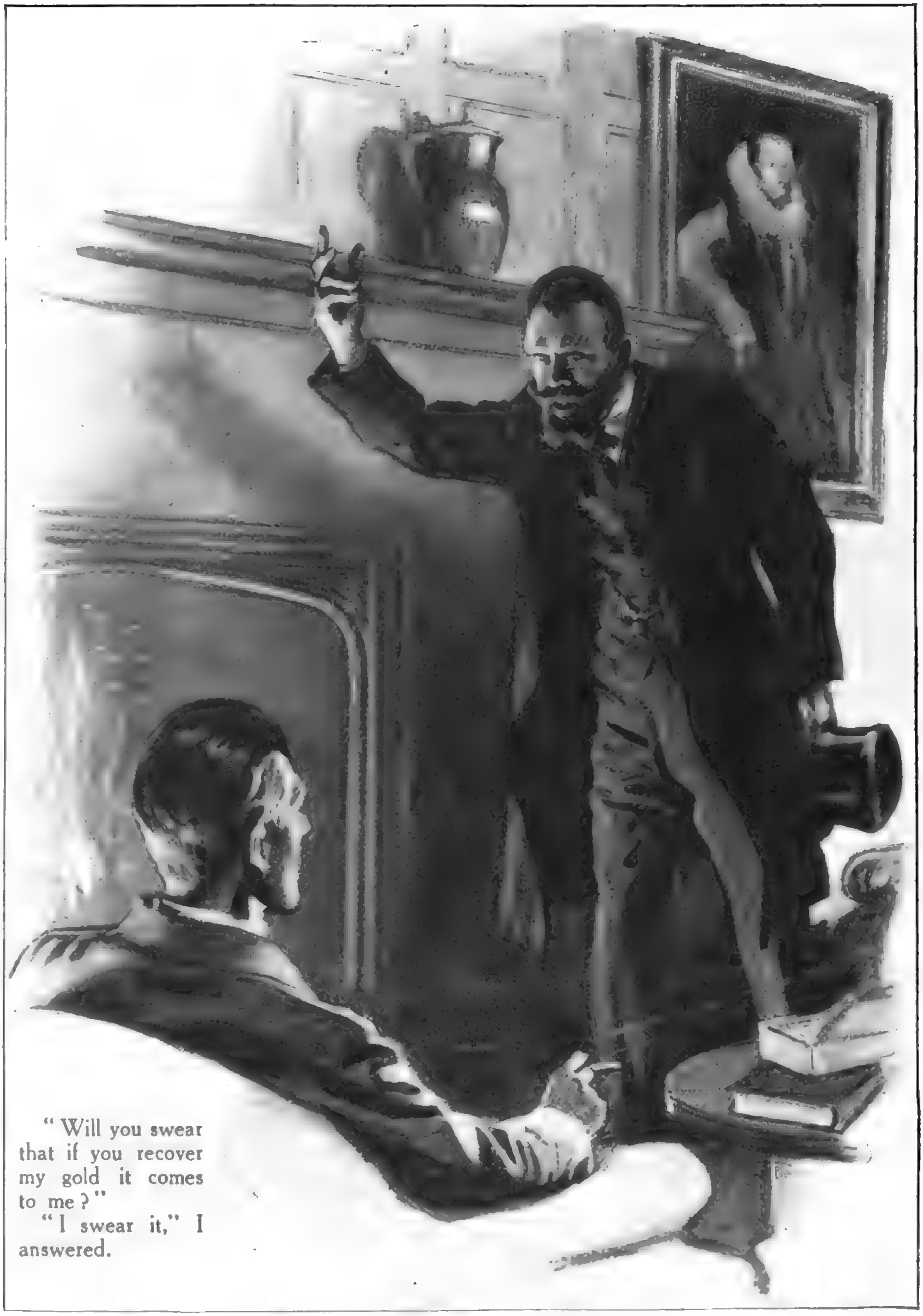
"Our friend," she announced, "called at the Monico, but took only an *apéritif* there. He then walked to Romano's and has ordered a table and dinner for two."

"Whereabouts?" I asked, quickly.

"Downstairs in the restaurant, on the right-hand side," she replied.

I rang up Romano's and engaged one of the tables in the balcony. In a quarter of an hour I was ensconced there behind the curtain, with Miss Rose Weston, the young woman who had brought me the news of Michael's change of plans, as my companion. She had found time to change into evening clothes, and she played her part exceedingly

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"Will you swear that if you recover my gold it comes to me?"

"I swear it," I answered.

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well. We should have passed anywhere as a very ordinary couple, indulging in a somewhat pronounced dinner flirtation. I kept my eye, however, on the table at which Michael was seated below, and in due course I was rewarded. A very elegant, quietly-dressed woman came into the restaurant and sank into the chair by his side. I saw at once that it was Janet.

"What you expected?" my companion asked, quickly.

"In a sense," I admitted. "Remember, when they leave, it is the woman you follow."

I watched them closely from behind the curtain. There was no more distinguished-looking woman in the room than Janet, or more beautiful. She talked in a low tone to her companion, and her manner was often earnest. Nevertheless, she never smiled. There was not a suggestion about her of festivity. She ate moderately, drank sparingly, and talked. All the time she gave one the impression of a great weariness. Towards the end of the meal, what I had been watching for happened. She opened her handbag and passed something across the table. It was about the size and shape of an ordinary sporting cartridge, but I felt certain, from the way she handled it, that it was heavy. I knew then that we were on the right track.

"You are satisfied?" my companion asked.

"Perfectly," I assured her. "I am going to run no further risk of being recognized. I shall pay the bill and go. You will remain. Remember it is the woman you must watch. Engage as much help as you require. She must be watched unceasingly."

My companion nodded.

"It will not be difficult," she said.

I took my departure, and at this stage of my search for the missing gold I took Rimmington into my confidence. He agreed with me as to the advisability of allowing Michael to remain at large for the present, and so far as he was concerned he satisfied himself with placing a strict watch upon the house in Adam Street where we had located him. I myself retired a little into the background, although I remained in the closest touch with Miss Weston. The whole scheme gradually unwound itself. Rimmington and I found a certain delight in fitting the pieces together. He himself brought some valuable information, which he laid before me after the dinner at Romano's.

"One of the out-porters at Waterloo," he announced, "seems to remember a small furniture-van backed up against the pavement, some distance away from where the majority of the taxicabs were unloading."

"He didn't notice the name on it, I suppose?" I asked.

"No such luck! There's another thing, though. One of the old hands there told another of my fellows that he noticed several porters about that night whose faces were quite unfamiliar to him and whom he has not seen since. The driver of the bus from the Milan insists upon it, as you remember, that Mme. di Miguel pushed away the first porter who accosted them, and insisted upon employing two of her own choosing."

I nodded.

"We have got so far, then," I pointed out, recapitulating items of information which had been brought us. "This pseudo South American and his wife drove up to Waterloo with three heavy cases. They were met there by confederates dressed in the uniform of railway porters, who probably took the boxes into the station and, choosing their opportunity, brought them out again and got them into the furniture-van. The inference is that the gold is still in London. To proceed. What have we learnt about Janet? She is staying in a boarding-house in the Cromwell Road, frequented by artists. She spends an hour or two every day at the South Kensington Museum, studying statuary. It is exactly four days since she brought a little specimen of some sort of work to Michael, something that, unless I am mistaken, was of considerable weight, for I noticed that her handbag sagged as she walked up the restaurant. Further——"

The telephone bell rang. I recognized Miss Weston's voice at the other end. I listened to what she had to say, and in ten minutes we were in my car and on the way to Twickenham. We picked up Miss Weston herself in Kensington.

"The woman whom I have been following," she announced, "is only a few minutes ahead of us. She is in a private car, and there is a strange man seated in front with the chauffeur."

"It looks well," Rimmington admitted. "Our friend has ordered the same table for dinner to-night at Romano's."

ON our way I had a moment of uneasiness. A grey touring car passed us at a great speed, and shot down the Brentford Road, considerably ahead of us. Rimmington spoke for a moment through the tube, and we pulled up at the district police-station.

"We've given Michael rope enough," he decided. "He may get the alarm at any moment now. I'll have him arrested."

I drew a little breath. It was hard to think that I should not be present at the end for which I had worked so zealously, but I realized the risk of letting him remain at large any longer. I waited while Rimmington entered the police-station and spoke to headquarters. When he returned, he

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brought with him a couple of plain-clothes men.

"There will probably be half-a-dozen of them," Rimmington pointed out, "and from what I know of the gang that Michael generally employs, there may be a little trouble."

We turned off the main road at Twickenham, and finally stopped before the gates of a large, old-fashioned villa, badly out of repair and apparently empty. The grounds sloped down to the river and the gates were padlocked. We climbed over, leaving Miss Weston behind.

"The house is called 'The Sanctuary,'" she said, as we left her. "Goodson, the sculptor in bronze, lived here once."

We hurried off. The place showed every sign of desertion, but there were marks of recent wheels upon the avenues, and as we turned the last corner we saw a thin cloud of smoke curling upwards from a long range of outbuildings which looked like a sort of annex to the kitchen. Rimmington quickened his pace. We all broke into a run. We went straight for the building which we now perceived to have been the studio. The door of a long outhouse stood open. We paused to look inside. There was a furniture-van there, and inside some clothing of rusty velveteen or corduroy. The porters' uniforms were accounted for. Entrance to the studio itself was gained by means of a stout oak door, obviously barred and bolted. We went round to the back, crossing a lawn where the grass and weeds were up to our knees. We failed to discover any other door, but somehow or other we found our way through a smashed window into the great room, with its dome-shaped ceiling. I think, even as we entered, we realized that we were too late. The place was empty. A small forge was burning, there were several strange-looking vessels lying about, the boxes of gold, covered only by a piece of matting which Rimmington kicked aside, were ranged against the wall. There was not a sound to be heard, but the place smelt of tobacco smoke, and indeed there was a faint cloud of blue smoke still hanging about the roof.

"We've lost them!" said Rimmington.

I thought of Gorty as I thrust my hand down amongst the gold pieces.

"We have the gold, though," I reminded him.

"And Michael, I trust," was the fervent rejoinder.

We searched the house, which was empty and desolate. Then we sent to the local police-station and arranged for the gold to be removed. Afterwards, we called on the house-agent. He made a little grimace when we mentioned "The Sanctuary."

"Thought I'd let it to a lady sculptor," he declared. "She paid for the house for a month, to see whether she could work there—wanted to do her own casting or something."

"She paid you for the month, I hope?" Rimmington inquired.

"Oh, she paid that all right," the agent replied. "I wish these old places were all pulled down. They're more trouble than they're worth."

"Did the lady bring you any references?" I asked.

"I didn't ask for any," the house-agent replied, frankly. "I was only too glad to get anyone even to talk about the property. Besides, she put the money down."

"Nevertheless," Rimmington said, quietly, "as a person who has had some experience in these matters—I am Inspector Rimmington of Scotland Yard—I should advise you to be a little careful how you deal with these large, old-fashioned houses. In the present case, you may be interested to know that the little forge in the studio at 'The Sanctuary' has been used for the purpose of melting down Russian gold."

"God help us!" the agent cried. "What, the Gorty and Metzger gold?"

"Precisely," Rimmington acquiesced. "They've only got rid of a little of it, as it happens, but, to judge from the preparations, they were going more extensively into it in a day or two."

WE drove back to London, and I followed my friend into his private room with a rare thrill of excitement. I saw his face grow white and stern as he listened to the report of the man who rose to meet him. Then he turned to me.

"The rooms in Adam Street are empty," he said. "Stanfield has not visited the British Museum to-day. We've lost him again! I ought to have known better," he added, bitterly, "than to have let him remain at liberty for a single moment."

"And the woman?" I asked, a little nervously.

Rimmington shook his head.

"We don't want her," he said. "She's just the decoy who may some day whistle her mate to his cell. It's a knock for us, Greyes. Neither Di Miguel nor his wife nor Michael Sayers!"

"But we have the gold," I reminded him once more.

"Damn the gold!" Rimmington retorted, profanely.

But Gorty thought otherwise. So, when he recovered consciousness, did Metzger.

Next month: "The Unfamiliar Triangle."

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The EVASIVE PAMPHLET

by A·S·W. ROSENBACH

ILLUSTRATED BY DUDLEY TENNANT

HE was disappointed again! He sat alone in his office thinking of the auction sale of the day before. A copy of the rare first edition of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," the immortal story of Edgar Allan Poe, was lost to him and his heirs for evermore.

He had gone to the auction with the virtuous intention of buying it; when the shabby little pamphlet with its brown paper wrappings—printed in Philadelphia in 1843—was offered, the bidding was remarkably spirited. It was finally sold to a distinguished collector for thirty-eight hundred dollars. He had been the underbidder, but what chance had a poor devil of a bibliophile against the wealthy captains of industry? At sales of this character the race is not to the swift, but to the—rich!

Robert Hooker had once owned a copy of this precious volume. This made his disappointment the keener. It was a more interesting example than the one that had just been offered under the hammer of the auctioneer, for it had been a presentation copy with a simple though beautiful inscription written in the delicate handwriting of the poet upon the title-page:—

"To Virginia from E. A. P."

This was the very copy the greatest of story-tellers had lovingly given to his wife. Years ago it had mysteriously disappeared from Hooker's office, where he had kept it in a fireproof safe, feeling it was more secure there than on the shelves of his library. He sought for it everywhere, offering large rewards for its return, but the evasive little volume never was heard of again.

Hooker was musing over his "defeat" of yesterday in the salesroom when his thoughts reverted to the fate of his own copy. Where was it? What was its history? Its possessor could not seek a purchaser, because the inscription on the title-page would instantly identify it. Had it been destroyed? Was it——

"A gentleman to see you, sir, about an old book!"

He instantly awoke from his reverie. It was his secretary who had spoken.

"Tell him I have no money for such things!" said Hooker.

John Lawrence, his secretary, did not turn away, but waited with the flicker of a smile upon his face. He knew the foibles of his employer. He had been with him for many years. And a really good clerk always knows his master's weaknesses.

"Hold on a minute, John. Perhaps I can give him a few minutes. Tell him to come in."

"Hallo, Colonel! What can I do for you this morning?" said Hooker, cheerily, to a middle-aged man, erect of figure, who had just entered. He was one of those men who make their living picking up old books, old guns, old papers, old coins, old pictures, old everything. He also, at times, had a faculty of picking up old liquors, which was not good for him. He was known as the "Colonel" because of his military bearing and his interest in the Civil War. He had really been a soldier serving in the glorious and extensive regiment known as the home guard.

"Good morning, Mr. Hooker. I've a matter I'd like to speak to you about—but

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in the strictest confidence. I'm on the track of a really fine book."

At this Hooker smiled. Although in his long and busy life and in his strange wanderings the Colonel had secured a few good things, his "finds" generally turned out to be of no value. Hooker had frequently advanced him money to purchase what the Colonel termed "nuggets," but when they were brought to him changed, in the twinkling of an eye, into fool's gold.

"Well, what is it?" said Hooker, rather impatiently, fearing another tug at his purse-strings.

"You've read this morning's papers? 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' brought at the sale yesterday thirty-eight hundred dol——"

"Enough of that!" retorted Hooker, who was becoming angry. "I never want to hear of that confounded book again!"

"But I know where there's another copy," protested the Colonel, weakly.

"So do I. In the British Museum!"

"No, Mr. Hooker. Right here in New York."

"Where?"

"But you're not interested, you just said——"

"Of course I am, you old fool—go on!"

"Well, the book's in an old house down near Washington Square. It'll be difficult to get. Its owner's in jail."

"In *jail!*"

"Yes. He's serving a stretch—twenty years."

"What for?"

"Murder!"

"Now, Colonel, I hope you didn't come here to amuse me with fairy tales. I'm very busy this morning."

"No. That's straight. He's up for twenty years. He murdered his sweetheart. The court brought in a verdict of manslaughter, so he got a light sentence."

"Well, what's that got to do with the book?"

"Have patience, Mr. Hooker. You know of the Tomlinson case?"

"Never heard of it."

"Impossible, sir! The newspapers were filled with it at the time. Seven years ago everyone was talking about it, and surely you remember——"

"No, Colonel, seven years ago I was in Europe. Tell me about it."

The Colonel went into details.

IN June of 1907 a family by the name of Clarke moved into two rooms in a large, old-fashioned residence on Eighth Street, near Fifth Avenue. They were there for less than a month when they gave the landlord notice. They could not remain in the house on account of ghosts! Now *everyone* believes in ghosts but landlords. It injures their business.

The Clarkes contended that every night in the front room the most mysterious noises were heard; they called in the janitor, but he knew nothing. The strange sounds continued; they were uncanny, inexplicable. The Clarkes moved out and they were succeeded by other nervous and hysterical persons. The landlord in desperation reduced the rent, but still the tenants would not remain.

At last even he, who was sceptical and would not believe in hobgoblins, or ghosts, or spirits, or any of those fantastic creatures that exist outside the material mind, resolved to investigate for himself. He literally camped in the rooms for months and heard not a sound! Every night he determined would be his last and that he would not waste any more of his valuable time over the mystical phantoms of his foolish tenants.

One evening, which he resolved was to be the final one, while he was playing solitaire to pass the tedium of the vigil, he heard a noise in the wall. He turned pale with fear. A cold chill ran up and down his back. A moment later the sound of a falling coin reached his ears, and there rolled toward him from the old Georgian fireplace a shining object.

It was a few minutes before he had the courage to pick it up. It was a small gold ring. He examined it carefully, and engraved therein were the initials "M. P. from J. L." He put the ring in his pocket, removed the fire-dogs, the tongs, the coal-scuttle, and the whole paraphernalia of fire-places, and looked up the flue. He could see nothing. Although it was a clear night he could not see the stars. Something was in the way. . . .

The finding next day of the poor, bruised body of little Marie Perrin up the chimney of "No. 8" was the sensation of the hour. A horrible crime had been committed, and in an unknown and terrible way. It was Edgar Allan Poe in a new guise and his wonderful stories immediately became popular, and new editions of the "Tales" were called for by a new set of readers. Some critics of crime suggested that "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" had been repeated at No. 8, East Eighth Street. The hiding-place of the body was identical with that in the famous story, and it was said that the police were on the look-out for apes, gorillas, and other animals, which alone were capable of committing such hideous crimes.

The whole life of poor little Marie was laid bare. Her picture was in every newspaper and her history was given from the day of her birth with remarkable ingenuity. The

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reporters, with uncontrolled imaginations, turned out from the scanty material at their hands an excellent biographical sketch, that seemed and rang true, which is sufficient for the reading public.

Marie Perrin had disappeared without paying her rent from No. 8 over a year ago. When the agent came to collect the arrears, he found the tenant had departed with all her chattels. This was a libel, for she was in the room, but not visible. The detectives, when they investigated into the tragedy, and after asking ten thousand questions in a thousand and one places, found that Marie had a sweetheart and that his name was Richard Tomlinson. He refused to admit his guilt, but after being prodded with the iron fork of the law, technically known as the "third degree," he broke down and confessed. In a fit of anger he struck her over the head with the brass fire-tongs. He had no intention of killing her, or even harming her, but he had become insanely jealous of another who was paying her attentions. In fact, he said he must have been mad at the time, as he did not remember having struck her until she lay before him, quiet and cold upon the floor.

After a trial lasting over two weeks, and full of sensational incidents, Tomlinson was sentenced to spend twenty years of his life in prison.

"THAT'S an interesting tale," said Robert Hooker, when the Colonel had stopped speaking; 'but what has all this to do with the first edition of Poe's story?"

"Well, you see, Tomlinson was a friend of mine. He told me that, after he had accidentally killed the girl, he was terribly frightened. He did not know what to do with the body. He had a mind to go to the police and confess all, but did not have the courage to do so. He remained in a trance, he thought, for hours, thinking of his fearful crime and the dreadful consequences. While he was in this deep, agonizing study, and not knowing what he was doing, he picked up a small book on her reading table. It was 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue.' It was the title that attracted him, and some compelling force, what it was he knew not, caused him to read it. He told me that never in his whole life had anything so interested him as that story on that frightful occasion; although pursued by terrible fears he read every word, every syllable of it. The rest you know."

"But, Colonel," said Hooker, with one thought uttermost in his mind, "it might be *any* edition, not necessarily the first, There have been hundreds of editions published. How do you know what edition it was?"

"It *was* the first, Mr. Hooker. Tomlinson told me the girl had borrowed it to read, and that it belonged to someone who had a mania for old books and who had kept it always under lock and key."

"Do you know where it is?"

"Yes."

"Can you get it?"

"Perhaps."

"I shall make it worth your while. How much do you want?"

"All I can get. I'll have to *steal* it!"

"What!"

"Yes, I'll have to steal it. It cannot be had in any other way. Why do you start?"

"I didn't think you'd have to do *that!*"

"Yes. You see, Tomlinson, when he moved from those furnished rooms, took everything he could carry to his brother's lodgings near Washington Square. The book is in a sealed trunk on the third floor. Tomlinson made his brother promise that this trunk was not to be disturbed in any circumstances until he came out of jail a free man. I've tried in every way—by bribery and everything—but his brother will not touch it. He seems afraid of that old trunk. I'll get it, however, at all costs. Are you with me?"

Hooker was, above everything, a true bibliophile. He instantly answered:—

"Yes, Colonel! Go the limit. I'll back you."

The Colonel without another word picked up his hat and left the office.

FOR three tedious weeks Hooker heard no more of the book or of his curious friend, the Colonel. The whole thing seemed like a tale woven by Poe himself.

Would the book, if it ever was secured, turn out to be a second edition and worthless? Book-lovers, after the strange manner of their kind, only cherish the first, the earliest issue, in the same state as it came from the master's hand, unrevised and with all the errors uncorrected. They do not care for new and more elegant editions. Hooker grew restless as the weeks rolled by, and still no Colonel.

One morning, as he was looking over his letters, a gentleman was announced. Then, tottering into the office, with his arm in a sling and a patch over his left eye, came the gallant Colonel.

"Why, Colonel, what's the matter?"

"Nothing at all, sir."

"But your arm and your——"

"That's my affair, Mr. Hooker. I've come to secure the reward of my labours. I've got the book," he said, in triumph. "I told you I'd get it."

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With trembling hands he grasped the book. A startled cry broke from his lips.

"Where is it?"

"Here in my pocket. Look at it. It's a superb copy!"

The Colonel laid before the astonished eyes of Richard Hooker the priceless first edition of Poe's marvellous story. It was in the original brown printed wrappers, just as it was published. With trembling hands he grasped the book; he turned the first page and gasped. A startled cry broke from his lips. The Colonel at once noticed his pallor. He did not dream that an old book would affect even the most ardent bibliophile in this manner. In all his experience of forty years he had never seen anyone so overcome at the sight of a dingy pamphlet.

There, upon the title-page, Hooker read the tender inscription written many generations ago, with which the most imaginative of American poets had presented his greatest story to his loving wife. It was his own copy, returned like bread upon the waters. Hooker was speechless. He went over to his cheque-book and handed the Colonel the equivalent of three thousand dollars. The Colonel retired, murmuring his thanks.

The book lay upon Hooker's desk. Here

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was a new problem, worthy of M. Dupin himself. Question after question came into his excited mind, to depart unanswered. Who had stolen it ? And how ? Why had it been taken ? How had Tomlinson secured it ? And what, above all, had it to do with Marie Perrin ?

HOOKER remained there, gazing at the pamphlet for hours. It fascinated him horribly. The luncheon hour went by and still he sat staring intently at its faded covers. Would he ever solve the riddle ?

His mind was still at work on the problem when he was interrupted by his secretary.

" It's closing time, sir. Is there anything you want before I go ? "

" Nothing, John, thank you."

The secretary turned to depart ! He drew back suddenly.

" The book ! Mr. Hooker, the book ! Where did you get *that ?* "

Robert Hooker looked at his confidential assistant. His face was the colour of the whitest parchment. His breath came in gasps, and cold drops of perspiration were visible upon his forehead.

' I bought it to-day," said Hooker, quietly. " It once belonged to me—and Marie Perrin."

" She was my——"

John Lawrence did not finish the sentence ; his face was twitching and he was evidently suffering from the keenest nervous excitement.

" Tell me about it, John," said Hooker, kindly. " You seem to know something of it."

" I do, Mr. Hooker. You'll forgive me, won't you ? I didn't mean to do anything wrong."

" Why, what do you mean ? "

" Well, years ago, on your return from Europe, you questioned me about that book. I was the only one who had access to the safe and knew the combination. I told you I knew nothing about it—that perhaps it had been mislaid before your departure for London. I lied, for I had taken it. I'd no intention of stealing it ; I did not even know it was particularly valuable. I read the story one day when I was alone, with no work to do. It was the best tale I'd ever read. I was absorbed by it. I could not get the horrible plot out of my head."

" Yes, John, go on. Where does Marie come in ? "

' I was engaged to her. I had known her for years. She came from Montpelier, Vermont, where we both were born. One day I told her of the story. She wanted to read it. Not thinking it any harm, I loaned it to her. She stopped for it one evening on her way home. I never saw her after that. I tried every way to find her, without avail. She had disappeared from her rooms on Eighth Street, and I never heard of her again until the frightful news came out. Detectives came to see me. My name was in the papers once or twice at the time, and the questions they asked me were terrible. I proved an alibi ; they had fixed the crime on Tomlinson, who, unknown to me, was uppermost in her affections. It was a bitter awakening. I've never been the same since. I think of her every night of my life—I've now told you all and I shall resign and leave you at once. You can have no more need of me."

" Stay, John. I forgive you. You've suffered enough. Go home—and come down to-morrow, as usual."

THE book still lay upon the desk. This time he would take it home to keep it in his library among his most valuable possessions. For surely it was the most interesting copy of " The Murders in the Rue Morgue " in existence ! Hooker turned the leaves to see whether, after its wanderings, all the pages were intact—" collating " it, as bibliophiles love to term this delightful occupation. Yes, it was perfect —just as when it had so mysteriously disappeared years ago. But, hold—what were the brown, reddish finger-marks on the back cover ? Hooker did not require to be told that it was the life-blood of poor Marie Perrin.

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TIGRE

by

ZANE GREY

ILLUSTRATED BY W·R·S·STOTT & A·G·SMALL

I.

"YES, I've a power over animals. Look at Tigre there! But the old women in Micas say I've found one wild thing I'll never tame."

"And that, señor?" asked Muella.

"My young and pretty wife."

She tossed her small head, so that her black curls rippled in the sunlight and the silver rings danced in her ears.

"Bernardo, I'm not a parrot to have my tongue slit, or a monkey to be taught tricks, or a jungle cat to be trained. I'm a woman, and——"

"Yes—and I am old," he interrupted, bitterly. "Look, Muella—there on the Micas trail!"

"It's only Augustine, your vaquero."

"Watch him!" replied Bernardo.

Muella watched the lithe figure of a man striding swiftly along the trail. He was not going to drive cattle up to the corrals, for in that case he would have been riding a horse. He was not going toward the huts of the other herders. He faced the jungle into which ran the Micas trail.

Surely he could not be on his way to Micas! The afternoon was far advanced and the village many miles away. No vaquero ever trusted himself to the dangers of the jungle at night. Even Augustine, the boldest and strongest of Bernardo's many herders, would scarcely venture so much. Yet Augustine kept on down the trail, passed the thatched bamboo fence, went through the grove of palms, and disappeared in the green wall of the jungle.

"He's gone!" cried Bernardo. "Muella, I sent Augustine away."

She saw a dull red in her husband's cheeks, a dark and sinister gleam in his eyes; and her surprise yielded to misgiving.

"Why?" she asked.

"He loved you."

"No! No! Bernardo, if that's why you sent him away, you've wronged him. Of all your vaqueros Augustine alone never smiled at me—he cared nothing for me."

"I say he loved you," returned Bernardo, hoarsely.

"Bernardo, you are unjust!"

"Would you lie to me? I know he loves you. Girl, confess that you love him. Tell it! I won't bear the doubt another day!"

Muella stood rigid in his grasp, her eyes blazing the truth that her lips scorned to speak.

"I'll make you tell!" he shouted, and ran to a cage of twisted vines and bamboo poles.

As he fumbled with the fastening of a door, his brown hands shook. A loud purr, almost a cough, came from the cage, then an enormous jaguar stepped out into the sunlight.

"Now, girl, look at Tigre!"

Tigre was of huge build, graceful in every powerful line of his yellow, black-spotted body, and beautiful. Still, he was terrible of aspect. His massive head swung lazily; his broad face had one set expression of brute ferocity.

The eyes of any jaguar are large, yellow, cold, pale, cruel, but Tigre's were frightful. Every instant they vibrated, coalesced, focused, yet seemed always to hold a luminous, far-seeing stare. It was as if Tigre was gazing beyond the jungle horizon to palm-leaf lairs which he had never seen, but which he knew by instinct. And then it was as if a film descended to hide their

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"Whatever I put Tigre to trail, he finds. Tigre will trail Augustine—catch him—kill him!" her husband said.

tawny depths. Tigre's eyes changed—they were always changing, only there was not in them the life of vision, for the jaguar was blind.

Bernardo burst into rapid speech.

"The taunting old crones of Micas were right when they said I could not tame the woman; but I've tamed every wild creature of the Taumaulipas jungle. Look at Tigre! Who beside Bernardo ever tamed a jaguar? Look, Tigre is my dog. He loves me. He follows me, he guards me, he sleeps under my hammock. Tigre is blind, and he is deaf, yet never have I trained any beast so well. Whatever I put Tigre to trail, he finds. He never loses. He trails slowly, for he is blind and deaf, but he never stops, never sleeps, till he kills!"

Bernardo clutched the fur of the great jaguar and leaned panting against the thatch wall of the cage.

"I'll soon know if you love Augustine!" he went on, passionately. "Look here at the path—the path that leads out to the Micas trail. See! Augustine's sandal prints in the dust! Now, girl, watch!"

He led Tigre to the path and forced the nose of the beast down upon Augustine's footmarks. Suddenly the jaguar lost all his lax grace. His long tail lashed from side to side. Then, with head low, he paced down the path. He crossed the grassy plot and went

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through the fence along the trail into the jungle

"He's trailing Augustine!" cried Muella.

She felt Bernardo's gaze burning into her face.

"Tigre will trail him—catch him—kill him!" her husband said.

Muella screamed.

"He's innocent! I swear Augustine does not love me! I swear I don't love him! It's a horrible mistake. He'll be trailed—ah, he'll be torn by that blind brute!" Muella leaped back from her husband. "Never! You jealous monster! For I'll run after Augustine—I'll tell him—I'll save him!"

She eluded Bernardo's fierce onslaught, and, fleet as a frightened deer, she sped down the path. She did not heed his hoarse cries, nor his heavy footsteps.

Bernardo was lame. Muella had so little fear of his catching her that she did not look back. She passed the fence, sped through the grove, and entered the jungle.

II.

THE trail was hard-packed earth, and ahead it lost its white line in the green walls. Muella ran swiftly, dodging the leaning branches, bowing her head under the streamers of moss, striking aside the slender palm-leaves. Gay-plumaged birds flitted before her, and a gorgeous butterfly crossed her path. A parrot screeched over her head.

She strained her gaze for the trailing jaguar. Then she saw him, a long black and yellow shape moving slowly under the hanging vines and creepers.

When Muella caught up with Tigre she slackened her pace, and watched for a wide place in the trail where she could pass without touching him.

"I must pass him," she muttered. "He can't hear me—I can do it safely—I must!"

But still she did not take advantage of several wide places.

Presently the trail opened into a little glade. Twice she started forward, only to hang back. Then desperately she went on, seeing nothing but the great spotted cat just in front of her.

Sharp spear-point palm-leaves stung her face, and their rustling increased her terror. She flashed by Tigre so close that she smelled him.

Muella uttered a broken cry and began to run as if indeed she were the wild creature Bernardo had called her. She looked over her shoulder to see the sinuous yellow form disappear round a bend of the trail. She was young, supple, strong, and it took much to tire her. She ran on and on, until her feet were heavy, her breath was almost gone, and her side pierced by a sharp pain. Then she fell to a walk, caught her breath, and once more ran.

Fears began to beset her. Had Augustine left the trail? How swiftly he had walked! It seemed as if she had run several miles. But that was well, for, the larger the distance, the farther she would get ahead of the jaguar.

Shadows began to gather under the overhanging vines and creepers. Only the tips of the giant cebals showed a glint of sunlight. The day was fast closing. Once more she ran on and on; and then, as she turned a curve a tall, dark form stood out of the green and blurred the trail.

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"Augustine! Wait! Wait!" she cried.

The man swung around and ran back. Muella, panting for breath and with her hand pressed over her heart, met him.

"Señora! What has happened?" he exclaimed.

"Wait. My breath's going," she gasped. 'Wait! But keep on—we—mustn't stop!"

Muella took a fleeting upward glance at him. It was so hurried that she could not be positive, but she thought she had caught a strange, paling flush of his bronzed face and a startled look in his dark eyes. Why should his meeting her unexpectedly cause more than surprise or concern?

As she trotted along she shot another quick glance up at him. He seemed unmistakably agitated; and this disconcerted her. She heard his amazed questions, but they were mostly unintelligible.

She had thought of nothing save to catch up with him and to blurt out that Tigre was on his trail, and why. The words now halted on her lips. It was not easy to tell him. What would he say—what would he do? A few moments back he had been only one of Bernardo's herders—the best, truly, and a man whom it was pleasing to look upon, but he had been nothing to her. He alone of the vaqueros had not smiled at her, and this piquing of her pride had gained him notice which otherwise he might never have got.

AS she pattered on, slowly regaining her breath, the presence of the man seemed to grow more real. It was well that she knew Augustine cared nothing for her, else she could not have told him of Bernardo's unjust suspicions.

The trail opened into a clearing where there were several old palm-thatched huts, a broken-down corral and a water-hole. The place had once been used by Bernardo's herders, but was now abandoned and partly overgrown. At this point Augustine, who for a time had silently stalked beside Muella, abruptly halted her.

"Señora, what is wrong? Where are you going?"

"Going!" She uttered a laugh. "Why, I don't know. I followed to warn you. Bernardo put Tigre on your trail!"

"Tigre? Santa Maria!"

"Yes. I ran, and ran, and passed him. He must be far back now. He's slow at first, but he's sure, and he's trailing you. Hurry on! You mustn't stop here!"

"Señora! You ran—you risked as much to save me? Oh, may our Blessed Lady reward you!"

"Man, I tell you, don't stop. Go on! You have only your machete. Why did you start into the jungle without a gun?"

"Bernardo drove me off. I owned nothing at the hacienda except my blanket and my machete."

"He's selfish—he was beside himself. Why, Augustine, he was jealous. He—he told me he drove you away because you—you cared for me. I'm ashamed to tell you. But, Augustine, he's growing old. You mustn't mind—only hurry to get safe from that terrible brute!"

"I forgive him, señora. It's his way to fall into a rage, but he quickly repents. And you, señora, you must take this old trail back to the hacienda. Go swiftly, for soon it will be night!"

"I'm not going back," said Muella, slowly. "I won't live any longer with Bernardo. Take me to Micas—to my sister's home."

With one long stride Augustine barred the trail and stood over her.

"You must go back. It's best you should know the truth. Bernardo spoke truth when he told you I loved you!"

"Augustine, you're telling a lie—just to frighten me back to him."

"No. Bernardo asked me for the truth, so I told him."

Muella's eyes dilated and darkened with shadows of amaze, wonder, and pain.

"Oh, why did you tell him! I didn't know. Oh, I swore by the Virgin that you had no thought of me. He'll believe that I lied."

"Señora, you are innocent, and Bernardo will learn it. You know him—how hot-headed he is, how quickly he is sorry. Go back. Take this old cattle road—here—and hurry. The sun has set. You must run. Have no fear for me!"

"I'm not going back to Bernardo." She straightened up, pale and composed, but as she stepped forward to pass the vaquero in the trail she averted her eyes. "Take me to Micas!"

With a passionate gesture Augustine stopped her.

"But, señora, consider. Darkness is upon us. Micas is a long way. You are only a girl. You can't keep up. You've forgotten that Tigre is on the trail."

"I forgot nothing," she replied, coldly. "I've begged you to hurry."

"Muella, go back at once. To-morrow—after a night in the jungle—with me—you can't go. "It'll be too late!"

"It's too late now," breathed the girl. "I can't go back now!"

"Go first, then," he said, whipping out the long machete. "I'll wait here for Tigre."

'Señor, there are other Tigres. There are panthers, too, and wild boars. I may lose the trail. Will you let me go alone?"

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III.

AUGUSTINE whispered the name of a saint, and, turning his dark face toward where the trail led out of the clearing, he strode on without sheathing his machete.

Muella kept close to him, and entered the enclosing walls of jungle verdure. She felt indeed that she was the untamed thing Bernardo had called her, and now she was hunted. Light as dropping leaves, her feet pattered in the trail. Augustine loomed beside her, striding swiftly, and now and then the naked blade he carried, striking against a twig or branch, broke the silence with a faint ring.

The green walls became hovering shadows, and turned to grey. Muella had an irresistible desire to look back. The darkening menace of the gloom before and on each side was nothing to that known peril behind. She saw nothing, however, but a dull, grey, wavering line fading into the obscurity of the jungle. She strained her hearing. Except for the soft swishing of her skirt on the brush, and the occasional low ring of Augustine's machete, there was absolutely no sound.

She noted that her companion never turned his head. Had he no fear? Quick flashes of memory recalled stories of this herder's daring. How tall and powerful he was—how swiftly he strode—how dark and stern and silent he seemed! He must know full well the nature of Bernardo's pet—the terrible blind brute that never failed on a trail.

All at once the jungle grew into two ragged walls of black separated by a narrow strip of paler shade. Night had fallen; and with it came a blinking of stars through dense foliage overhead, and the lighting of fire-flies. Insects began to hum. Rustlings in the brush augmented Muella's sensitiveness. A strange call of a night-bird startled her, and instinctively she shrank closer to Augustine. She wished to speak to him, to make the silence bearable, but stealthy steps off to the right made her heart leap and her tongue mute.

Augustine heard, for he struck the leaves with his machete. From the enshrouding blackness came the snapping of twigs, pattering little steps, the rush of animals running through grass or ferns, and soft rustlings in the brush. Then, the night silence awoke to strange cries—squall of cat and scream of panther, squeaks and grunts and squeals of peccaries, and inexpressibly wild sounds, too remote to distinguish.

"Oh, Augustine!" whispered Muella, fear at last unlocking her lips. "Listen! All before us—do you hear?"

"Señora, we have not much to fear ahead," he replied. "But behind—a trailing Tigre warms with the night! We must not lag!"

"I'm not tired, I can walk so all night; but the steps, the cries, frighten me. It grows darker, and I stumble."

She fancied she saw him reach out as if to help her, and then draw suddenly back. The darkness became so thick that she could scarcely see him. Like a tall spectre he moved on.

She groped for his arm, and found it, and slipped her hand down to his. Instantly she felt his strong fingers convulsively close round hers. The warm clasp helped and cheered her.

So, mile after mile, Muella kept tireless pace with the herder; and when the jungle creatures ceased their hue and quest, and the dead silence once more settled thickly down, the strange night flight lost its reality and seemed a dream. The black shadows lifted and paled to opaque gloom. The moon was rising. Muella hailed it with joy, for it meant that the night was far advanced and that their way would be lightened.

Soon all about her was a radiant, encompassing world of silver shadows and gleams. It was a beautiful night. The cold fear weighing her heart lessened, seemed momentarily to be thrilled and warmed away. She loved that great silver-orbed, golden-circled moon; and now she looked up at it through a streaked and fringed and laced web.

She wondered if Augustine saw the beauty of the sharp-cut palms, the delicate-leaved bamboos, and the full-foliaged cebals, all festooned with long silver streamers of moss. Gnarled branches of a dead monarch of the forest, silhouetted against the deep blue of the sky, showed orchids and aloes and long, strangling vines—parasites that had killed it. Every unshadowed leaf along the trail glistened white with dew. The glamour of the white night was upon Muella. Augustine's voice broke the spell.

"You are tired, but we must not lag. Shall I carry you?"

"No, no! I can keep up."

His words and the glint of his naked machete brought her back to actuality. She slipped her hand from his.

Slowly a haze overspread the moon. The brightness failed, and then the moonlit patches imperceptibly merged into the shadows, until all was grey. The jungle trees rose dim and weird and lost their tips in clouds of mist. A chicolocki burst into song, and the broken notes heralded the coming of day.

"Augustine, it is near dawn," she said. "Oh, how good the light will be. I'm so cold, so wet. We shall be safe in Micas soon, shall we not?"

The herder mumbled a reply that she did not understand.

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IV.

SWIFTLY upon the grey dawn came the broad daylight. The clouds of cream mist rose and broke and rolled away, letting the sunshine down into the jungle. The balmy air rang with the melodies of birds. Flocks of parrots passed overhead, screeching discordant clamour.

Presently it struck Muella that the trail was growing narrow and rough and overgrown. She had journeyed to Micas often enough to be familiar with the trail, and this, so wild and crooked, was not the right one.

"Augustine, have you missed the way?" she queried, anxiously.

Briefly he replied that he was making a short cut. Muella did not believe him. She walked on, and began again to look back. When she caught Augustine doing likewise, she gave way to dread.

The morning wore on, the sun grew warm, and with the heat of the day came the jungle flies and mosquitoes. Augustine was inured to their attacks, but Muella impatiently fought them, thus adding to her loss of energy.

When, at the crossing of a network of trails, Augustine chose one at random, Muella was certain of the worst. She taxed him about it, and he admitted he was off the course, but as he was sure of his direction there was no need to fear. He assured her that he would have her at her sister's home in Micas by noon.

Noon found them threading a matted jungle where they had to bend low among the deer and peccary trails. The character of the vegetation had changed. It was now dry, thorny, and almost impenetrable.

Suddenly Muella jerked her hand away from a swinging branch which she had intended to brush aside.

"Look, Augustine, on my hand. Garrapatoes! Ugh, how I hate them!"

Her hands and wrists were dotted with great black jungle ticks. Augustine removed them, and as he did so, Muella saw his fingers tremble. The significance of his agitation did not dawn upon her until she was free of the pests, and then she fancied that her touch had so moved him. It was wonderful, it warmed her blood, and she stole a glance at him. But Augustine was ashen white; his thoughts were far from the softness and beauty of a woman's hand.

"Augustine, you have lost your way!" she cried.

Gloomily he dropped his head and let his silence answer.

"Lost in the jungle! We're lost! And Tigre is on our trail!" she shrieked.

Panic overcame her. She tottered and fell against him. Her whole slender length rippled in a violent trembling. Then she beat her hands frantically on Augustine's shoulders, and clutched him tight, and besought him with inarticulate speech.

"Listen, señora, listen," he kept saying. "If you give up now, I can't save you. We're lost, but there's a way out. Listen—don't tear at me so—there's a way out. Do you hear? You go on alone—follow these deer tracks till you come to water. Soon they'll lead to water. That water will be the Santa Rosa. Follow up the stream till you come to Micas. It'll be hard, but you can do it."

"Go all alone! And you?" she said, brokenly.

"I'll turn on our back trail. I'll meet Tigre and stop him."

"Tigre will kill you!"

"He is blind and deaf. I shall be prepared. I've a chance, at least, to cripple him."

"At the end of the trail Tigre is a demon. He has been trained to kill the thing he's put to trail. You—with only a machete! Ah, señor, I've heard that you are brave and strong, but you must not go back to meet Tigre. Come! We'll follow the deer tracks together. Then if Tigre catches us—well, he can kill us both!"

"Señora, I can serve you best by going back."

"You think that if you took me to Micas the old women would talk—that my good name would be gone?" she asked, searchingly.

"Señora, we waste time, and time is precious," he protested.

Muella studied the haggard, set face. This man meant to sacrifice his life for her. Deep through the fire of his eyes she saw unutterable pain and passion. If she had doubted his love, she doubted no more. He must be made to believe that she had followed him, not alone to save him from Tigre, but because she loved him. Afterward he would be grateful for her deceit. And if her avowal did not break his will, then she would use a woman's charm, a woman's sweetness.

"Señor, you told Bernardo the truth—and I lied to him!" she said.

Stranger than all other sensations of that flight was the thrill in her as she forced herself to speak.

"What do you mean?" demanded Augustine.

"He asked you if you loved me. You told the truth. He asked me if—if I loved you. And—I lied!"

"Santa Maria!" the man cried, starting up impulsively. Then slowly he fell back. "Señora, may the saints reward you for your brave words. I know! You are trying to keep me from going back. We waste precious time—go now!"

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She flung herself into his arms, hid her face in his breast, and pressed all her slender, palpitating body close to his.

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"Augustine, wait, wait," she cried.

Running blindly, she flung herself into his arms. She hid her face in his breast, and pressed all her slender, palpitating body close to his. As if he had been turned to stone, he stood motionless. She twined her arms about him, and her dishevelled hair brushed his lips. She tried to raise her face—failed—tried again, and raised it all scarlet, with eyes close shut and tears wet on her cheeks. Blindly she sought his mouth with her lips—kissed him timidly—tremulously—and then passionately.

With that, uttering a little gasp, she swayed away and turned from him, her head bowed in shame, one beseeching hand held backward to him.

"Don't go! Don't leave me!"

"Dios!" whispered Augustine.

Presently he took the proffered hand and, leading her, once more plunged into the narrow trail.

V.

FOR hours Muella walked with lowered eyes. She plodded on, bending her head under the branches, and constantly using her free hand to fight the pests.

Her consciousness, for the while, was almost wholly absorbed with a feeling of an indefinable difference in herself. She seemed to be in a condition of trembling change, as if the fibres of her soul were being unknit and rewoven. Something illusive and strange and sweet wavered before her—a promise of joy that held vague portent of pain. This inexplicable feeling reminded her of fancies, longings, dreams of her girlhood.

At length sensations from without claimed full share of Muella's attention. The heat had grown intense. She was becoming exhausted. Her body burned of red-hot fire. Still she toiled on, because she believed that Micas was close at hand.

The sun went down and night approached. There was no sign of water. Augustine failed to hide his distress. He was hopelessly lost in the jungle. All the trails appeared to lead into the same place—a changeless yellow and grey jungle.

The flies pursued in humming wheel, and clouds of whining mosquitoes rose from the ground. The under side of every leaf, when brushed upward, showed a red spot, which instantly disintegrated and spilled itself like a bursting splotch of quicksilver upon the travellers. And every infinitesimal red pinpoint was a crawling jungle pest. The dead wood and dry branches were black with innumerable garrapatoes.

Muella had been born a hill native, and she was not bred to withstand the savage attack of the jungle vermin. The time came when she fell, and implored Augustine to put her out of her misery with his machete. For answer he lifted her gently and moved on, carrying her in his arms.

Night came. Augustine travelled by the stars, and tried to find trails that led him in a general direction northward. By and by Muella's head rolled heavily and she slept.

At length the blackness and impenetrable thicket hindered his progress. He laid Muella down, covered her with his blanket, and stood over her with drawn machete till the moon rose.

The light aiding him, he found a trail, and taking up his burden he went on. And that night dragged to dawn.

Muella walked little the next day. She could hardly stand. She had scarcely strength to free her hair from the brush as it caught in passing. The burning pain of her skin had given place to a dull ache. She felt fever stealing into her blood.

Augustine wandered on, over bare rocks and through dense jungles, with Muella in his arms. He was tireless, dauntless, wonderful in his grim determination to save her. Worn as she was, sick and feverish, she yet had moments when she thought of him; and at each succeeding thought he seemed to grow in her impression of strength and courage.

But most of her thoughts centred on the trailing Tigre. The serpents and panthers and peccaries no longer caused Muella concern—she feared only the surely gaining jaguar.

VI.

NIGHT closed down on them among tangled mats and labyrinthine wens of heavy underbrush.

"Listen!" whispered Muella, suddenly, with great black eyes staring out of her white face.

From far off in the jungle came a sound that was like a cough and growl in one.

"Ah! Augustine, did you hear that?"

"Yes."

"Was it a jaguar?"

"Yes."

"A trailing jaguar?"

"Yes; but surely that could not have been Bernardo's. Tigre would not give a cry on the trail."

"Oh, yes, Tigre is deaf and blind, and he has been trained, but he has all the jungle nature. He has Bernardo's cruelty, too."

Again the sound broke on the still night air. Muella slipped to the ground with a little gasp. She heard Augustine cursing against the fate that had driven them for days under trees, trees, trees, and had finally brought them to bay in a corner where there were no trees to climb. She saw him face about to the trail by which they had come and stand there with his naked blade

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upraised. He blocked the dim, narrow passage-way.

An interminable moment passed. Muella stopped breathing, tried to still the beating of her heart, so that she could listen. There was no sound save the low, sad hum of insects and the rustle of the wind in the leaves. She seemed to feel Tigre's presence out there in the blackness. Dark as it was, she imagined she saw him stealing closer, his massive head low, his blind eyes flaring, his huge paws reaching out.

A slight rustling checked all motion of her blood. Tigre was there, ready to spring upon Augustine. Muella tried to warn him, but her lips were dry and dumb. Had he lost his own sense of hearing ?

Her head reeled and her sight darkened ; but she could not swoon. She could only wait, while the slow moments wore on.

Augustine loomed over the trail, a dark, menacing figure. Again there came a rustling and a stealthy step, this time in another direction, and Augustine turned toward it.

Long silence followed ; even the humming of insects and the moaning of the wind seemed to grow fainter. Then came more tickings of the brush and a padded footfall. Tigre had found them—was stalking them !

Muella lay there helplessly waiting. In the poignancy of her fear for Augustine, expecting momentarily to see the huge jaguar leap upon him, she forgot herself. There was more in her agony of dread than the sheer primitive shrinking of the flesh, the woman's horror of seeing death inflicted. Through that terrible age-long flight through the jungle Augustine had come to mean more than a protector to her.

She watched him guardedly facing in the direction of every soft rustle in the brush. He was a man at the end of his resources, ready to fight and die for a woman.

The insects hummed on, the wind moaned in the leaves, the rustling came from one point and another in the brush, but Tigre did not appear. The black night lightened and the moon rose. Muella now distinctly saw Augustine—dishevelled and ragged, white and stern and wild, with his curved blade bright in the moonlight.

Then the grey mist crept up to obscure the white stars and the moon, and at last the blue vault. The rustlings ceased to sound in the brush. From far off rasped the cough of a jaguar. It appeared to come from the same place as when first heard. Hope had new birth in Muella's heart.

MOMENTS like hours passed ; the insects ceased to hum and the wind to moan. The grey shadows fled before a rosy dawn.

Augustine hewed a lane through the dense thicket that had stopped him, and presently he came upon a trail. He hurried back to Muella with words of cheer. Strength born of hope returned to her, and she essayed to get up.

Helping her to her feet, he half led and half carried her into the trail. They went on for a hundred paces, to find that the path suddenly opened into a wide clearing. To Muella it seemed that she had seen the place before. Then she recognized a ruined corral, some old palm-thatched huts, and a water-hole as belonging to the clearing through which they had long before passed.

" We've travelled back in a circle ! " exclaimed Augustine. " We're near the hacienda—your home ! "

Muella leaned against him and wept. First of all was the joy of deliverance.

" Muella, you are saved ! " Augustine went on. " The distance is short—I can carry you. Bernardo will forgive—you know how he flies into a passion, and then how he repents."

" Yes, yes. I'll go back to him—tell him the truth—ask his mercy ! "

From the centre of the clearing came a rustling of dry leaves, then a loud purr, almost a cough. Augustine stiffened, and Muella clutched frantically at him.

For a long moment they stood, dark eyes staring into dark eyes, waiting, listening. Then Augustine, releasing his hold on the trembling girl, cautiously stepped upon a log and peered over the low palms. Almost instantly he plunged down with arm uplifted.

" Santa Maria ! Tigre ! He's there ! " he whispered. " He's there, beside the body of something he's killed. He's been there all night. He was there when we first heard him. We thought he was trailing. Muella, I must see closer. Stay back—you must not follow ! "

But as he crept under the low palms she followed him. They came to the open clearing. Tigre lay across the trail, his beautiful yellow and black body stretched in lax grace, his terrible sightless eyes riveted on a dead man beside him.

" Muella—stay back—I fear—I fear ! " said Augustine.

He crept yet a little farther, and returned with pale and quivering jaw.

" Muella, it's Bernardo ! He's dead—has been dead for days. When you started off that day to warn me, Bernardo must have run round by the old wagon road to head off Tigre. The blind brute killed him ! "

" Bernardo repented ! " moaned Muella. " He repented ! "

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HOW TO MAKE THE BEST OF LIFE

by

Arnold Bennett

II.

ESTABLISHING GOOD HUMOUR: THREE AIDS.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR FELLOW.

UNLESS you believe that solitude is the best of life, and have the money and enterprise to buy a mountain-top and the skill to do your own washing-up, fabricate your own clothes and food, and extract your own teeth, you will not make the best of life without making the best of your relations with your fellow-creatures. Now, the subject of human relations is immense—and growing every year—but two main principles run through it like great roads.

Perhaps you have caught a horrid little boy pulling the legs off a live fly. Perhaps you have been the horrid little boy yourself; most of us have. He enjoys the operation with a wonderfully detached mind. Of course, he is inflicting atrocious cruelty, and doing it deliberately, for his own diversion. I call him horrid, and at the moment of dismembering he certainly is horrid. But he is not generally a monster of iniquity. Probably his mother dotes on him, and rightly; and he is capable of tenderness even to his sisters. He may be a fine boy, full of ideals and good intentions and the desire to leave the world better than he found it. Yet he will torture a helpless and innocent animal! Why? Simply because it does not occur to him to think what the fly is feeling.



"Suppose a man as big as the Eiffel Tower came."

He omits to put himself in the place of the fly. He doesn't ask himself:—

"Suppose a man as big as the Eiffel Tower came and pulled *my* legs off, how should *I* feel?"

No, he lacks the imagination which is necessary to this feat of putting himself in the fly's place. One of the chief defects of youth, if not the chief defect, is lack of imagination. You say:—

"Oh! But it can't be lack of imagination. I happen to know this particular boy. He is a very imaginative boy. He will push the sofa into the middle of the room, jump

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on to it, and imagine himself on a desert island; and he can make up stories and adventures for himself in a marvellous way."

That, however, is not due to imagination, but to fancy or invention—a different and an inferior thing. If, for example, he could really imagine himself on a desert island he wouldn't play at the desert island game, for the reason that it would be far too unpleasant. He confines his fancy and invention to the pleasant, romantic aspects of the affair.

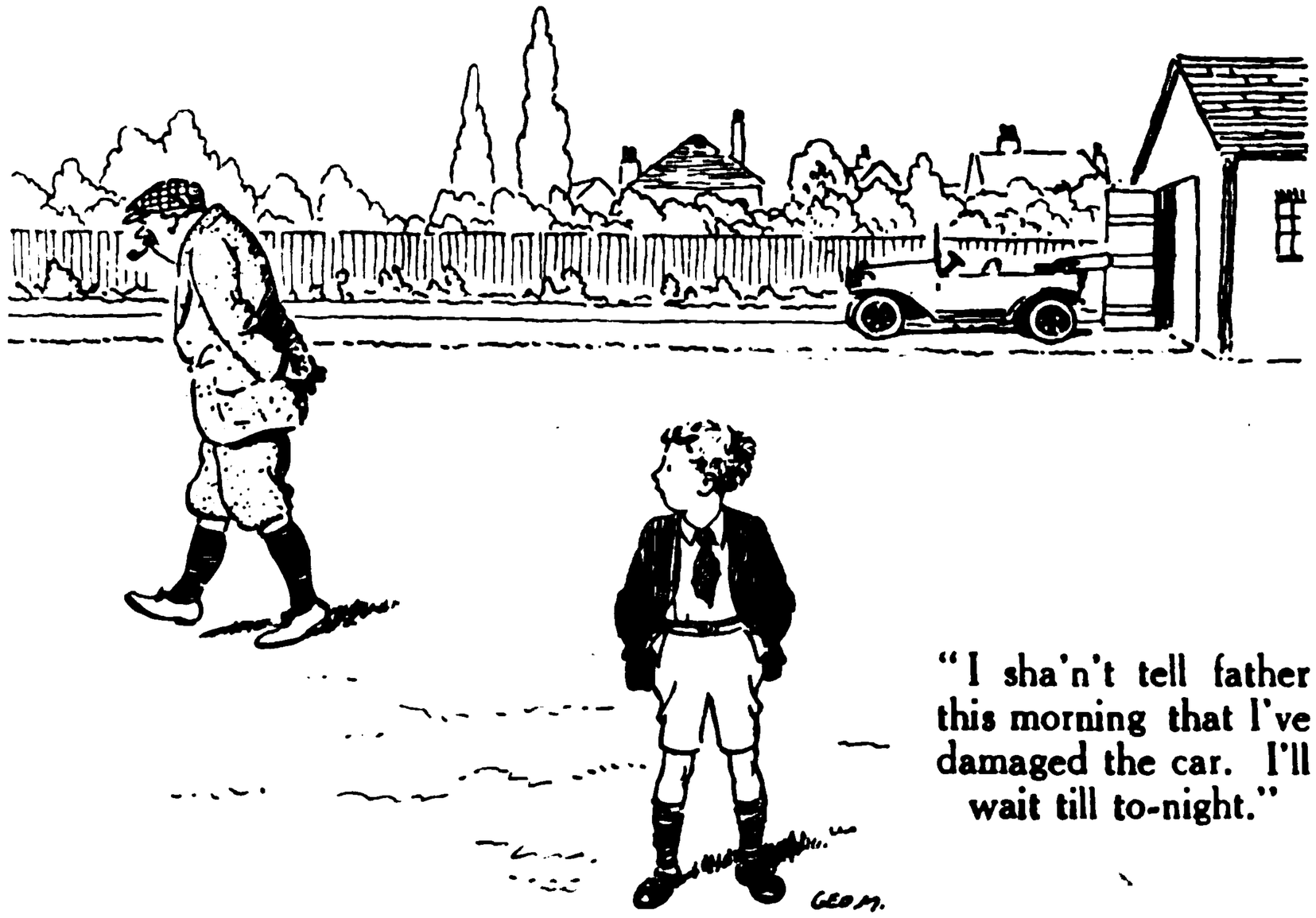
The test of genuine imagination is the power to put yourself fully in the place of another being. By so doing, and not otherwise, you will avoid unnecessary social friction—and here is the first great principle of right human relations. Not all friction can be avoided, but a vast deal of friction can be avoided. The fly might have to be killed as a poison-carrier. But the boy sets up unnecessary friction between himself and the fly, and if the fly was a few sizes larger the boy would soon know about the friction. (Boys are much less apt to pull the legs off wasps, bees, or hornets, because these beasts can react on the boy and make friction apparent.)

It is notorious that youth is cruel, uncompromising, and harsh in judgment. Youth will deny this hotly, but the thing is so; and the chances are a thousand to none that when youth ages it will come round to the view that youth is cruel, uncompromising, and harsh. A large part of the explanation lies in the above-named defect—lack of imagination. Nearly all cruelty in human relations springs from lack of imagination.

The deliberate cultivation of the gift of putting yourself in the other person's place is the beginning of wisdom in human relations and the foundation of permanent good humour. The practice of this gift will change the very flavour of life. Its influence on the other person is magical—he feels at once that he is being understood; but its influence on oneself is almost equally magical. When you understand a person, realize his circumstances, desires, difficulties, you appreciate him, you like him. You like him because you *become* him. You make excuses for him. You turn his flank instead of offering a frontal attack. You are in the citadel before he knows where he is, and he feels glad to have you there. His life is sweetened, and so is yours.

My position is that the regular detailed exercise of the imagination in regard to others should take precedence over all other educational exercises. It cannot be usefully started on a considerable scale until the faculties have reached a certain degree of maturity, but it should be started too soon rather than too late. Boys themselves have the rudiments of the gift. Nearly any boy will say:—

"I sha'n't tell father this morning that I've damaged the car—he's not in a good temper. I'll wait till to-night—he may have made a good score at golf."



"I sha'n't tell father this morning that I've damaged the car. I'll wait till to-night."

The boy, in a crude manner, is exercising real imagination; he is putting himself in his father's place. The gift is developing within him.

Sometimes when I see young men—yes, and old men, too—doing physical jerks, I think that the same amount of time given to the cultivation of the imaginative faculty might have decidedly more important results.

How is the faculty to be cultivated? By privately questioning oneself about the other man. "What does he want more than anything else? What is his weak point? What is his strong point? Why is he gloomy to-day? Why is he radiant? What are his worries? What is his notion of myself? How can I give him pleasure? Is he unwell? What are the things that annoy him? What is he thinking about? How can I flatter

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him? How should I feel in his place?" The faculty will grow just as a muscle will grow; also it will wither just as a muscle will wither; and for the same reasons.

You may argue that the ultimate aim of the whole business is selfish. I would not deny it. But if you try to decide what is selfish and what is not you are lost. Nobody will ever decide what is selfish and what is not. The puzzle is academic, and has little practical interest. Whatever your aim may be in practising imagination and putting yourself in the other man's place, the beneficial nature of the result is beyond argument. It works good all round. It lessens friction; it increases comprehension; it broadens the mind; it is at the bottom of all diplomacy; it achieves your desires more quickly than any other device; it is the highest form of sagacity; it brightens the whole aspect of existence.

KEEPING OFF THE BENCH.

The second main principle which should dominate human relations is as negative as the first is positive. First, understand your fellow. Second, do not judge him, or at any rate do not judge him adversely. It will be said that, since "to understand everything is to forgive everything," the second is merely a corollary of the first. I do not think that this is so. To understand everything is not to forgive everything. It may happen that an expert in understanding is a severe judge of all conduct except his own. Some men will analyse motives with extraordinary insight and fairness, and then behave like merciless executioners to the subject of their analysis. And even if to understand everything did result in forgiving everything, the aphorism would have little practical application to human beings, because we never do and never shall understand everything.

No! Do not for one absurd moment imagine that the effort of putting yourself in the place of your fellow is the final effort in the immense and complicated business of achieving good humour. Having understood as far as you can—refrain from moral condemnation! You may usefully practise moral laudation, within reasonable limits, though there can be no point in carrying indulgence to the limit of mawkishness; but do not judge adversely. The habit of judging, and especially of judging adversely, is at once the most popular and the most ridiculous of all human habits. It is more popular than alcohol, more ridiculous than vanity, and probably more poisonous than any drug yet invented.

Who am I to judge? Who are you to pass verdicts? Who put us on the bench? Have we heard all the evidence, or the hundredth part of it? Is there any possibility of us doing so? Are we not all equally in the dock? There is something tragically comic about the spectacle of one human being judging another.

Do you judge yourself? Not usually. A few people do. They "lie awake at night weeping for their sins," but never for their big, glaring sins—only for their little sins or for purely imaginary sins. And I am not sorry for them because, while they are a nuisance to me personally, I know that they are enjoying themselves. An enlarged conscience is much more fun than an enlarged liver. But the majority of us do not judge ourselves adversely. We have all the material for adverse judgment before us, even if we don't care to examine it closely—but we refrain from judgment. We are always the advocate for the defence, and our ingenuity in defence is absolutely prodigious. The consequence is that we are on very good terms with ourselves. If we held the same attitude towards our fellows we should be on very good terms with the rest of the world: which is the immediate aim.

But, you say, one is bound to judge. Conclusions are unavoidable. Not at all. It is quite possible to refrain by an effort of the will. Often, when the case seems to us to be difficult, we do easily refrain. Well, the case is really always difficult. It will be soon enough for us to begin judging when we have attained omniscience. We aren't there yet. Perhaps I had better speak for myself and say that I am not. Suspension of judgment, abstinence from judgment, can assuredly be acquired by continual watchfulness. It is a mere habit, like other habits—like the habit of judging. Its results are a conspicuous lessening of self-conceit, an increase of charitableness, and the growth of a general pleasantness. Indeed, it confirms and strengthens all the excellent consequences of putting yourself in the other man's place. This is the second aid towards good humour.

But I am not to be interpreted as recommending the abolition of the penal code. No doubt, if there were fewer judges, and if the prison system was rather less, instead of rather more, vicious than the criminals whom it martyrizes, the world would be a better place; but a penal code is essential. Society must protect itself. However clumsily and wickedly and inefficiently, it must protect itself from the unsocial effects of certain acts. Its first duty is to hold together and maintain its authority over its members. Any society must govern according to the plane of intelligence of the more stupid mass of its members. And it must have rules, and those rules must have as few exceptions as possible. It is bound to be less human than a human being; and some of the standards of conduct applying to a human being cannot, and should not, apply to a society. A society must

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judge, and it must appoint human beings to judge on its behalf, and those human beings must not deal with the origin of transgressions against the code; they can only deal with such transgressions in the light of their effects on the structure of the society. They are not individuals but impersonal agents.



"I might not presume to judge you, but I should presume to hit you over the head with a poker."

And even individuals must protect themselves. A man's duty is to keep his end up. As a matter of practice the Biblical exhortation to turn the other cheek has not yet had any conspicuous success in the Christian world. I am well within the mark in saying that nine hundred and ninety-nine people out of every thousand, from archbishops to bootblacks, consistently ignore this exhortation in the conduct of their private lives. And indeed it is a direct incitement to anarchy. It would not work in Heaven itself. It never did work anywhere.

If one man does an act which injures or might injure the well-being of another man, the second has got to take measures to guard his own interests. He would be a fool and a sinner if he did not.

This procedure, however, is not necessarily connected with moral judgment. If the required procedure involves unpleasantness for the injurer, that, so far as the defender is concerned, is accidental and not essential. If you broke with violence into my house and refused to retire, I might not presume to judge and condemn you, but I should presume to hit you over the head with a poker. Circumstances may and do arise in which it is possible to hit a fellow-creature over the head in a spirit of perfect Christian charity. It is the spirit in which these defensive things are done which alone counts. The occasional necessity of doing them cannot at all impair the force of the argument in favour of abstinence from adverse judgments. And a man ought to be able to do them without thereby losing his good humour and becoming a moral prig who arrogates to himself functions which are reserved for some power higher than the human.

THE AVOIDANCE OF WORRYING.

I have dealt with two matters concerning one's relations with others. I will now deal with a matter concerning oneself alone.

Few people pay attention to the mass of faces and demeanours which, especially in large towns, they see every day of their lives. Most of us naturally will notice a face or demeanour now and then, but we take the mass for granted, like bricks in an enormous wall. We see mechanically, without real observation, and though we have full opportunity for doing so, we fail to draw general conclusions from the vast quantities of human facts presented to us between every sunrise and sunset. If we did draw general conclusions, there is one above all others that we should certainly draw; and since everybody is very much like everybody else, we should have the wit to apply the same conclusion to ourselves.

That conclusion is that the majority of us, in addition to adopting a too critical attitude towards the human race, are addicted to worrying. Worry sits on the countenance of nearly every season-ticket-holder in the morning train and in the evening train. You see it in the streets, offices, and restaurants, and you can even meet it in the country lanes. The habit of worrying infallibly leaves its mark, and the mark is there for all to notice.

Most people who have the money to buy them take drugs of some sort or another; perhaps relatively harmless drugs, but still drugs. Penetrate into the secret existence of nearly any man or woman, and, with the rarest exceptions, you will find drugs. Not that self-drugging does any good in the main result. It undoubtedly does more harm than good.

Now, in a similar way we are a nation of

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secret worriers. I maintain that no average honest observer, using his eyes, can walk along a busy street or journey in a daily train and avoid this general conclusion. To which you may reply that the majority of us have ample cause for worry. With which I do not agree. I will define worrying as letting the mind



Worry sits on the countenance of nearly every season-ticket-holder in the train.

dwell persistently on troubles. That everybody has troubles is sure. But that the majority of us have enough troubles to justify us in letting our minds dwell on them persistently is far less sure. Indeed, I would deny it. Miserable and even tragic lives are not rare, but the average person in any Anglo-Saxon community enjoys an ordered and secure existence. He seldom has as much as he wants; often he has a lot less than he needs; but he generally has enough to manage with. The means of contentment are his if he knows how to employ them. He might be better off, but he might also be a lot worse off. Misfortunes may come, but they are usually not the misfortunes that in his worrying he has foreseen.

The truth is that most of us live in expectation of some catastrophe that never occurs. Look back into the weird history of your own brain, so full of secrets that nobody will ever learn, and dare to say that this is not so. You will not dare. And you may reasonably count on it that when you come to die you will still have escaped from those calamities the thought of which has irritated, if not poisoned, your days since first you understood the meaning of responsibility. If the experience of generations is a guide, it is certain that quite eighty per cent. of all worrying is perfectly futile. And of course it is worse than futile—it is harmful; it is a canker eating at the roots of happiness. The complexion of the general life of the community would change, faces and voices would brighten, paradise itself would be anticipated, if all perfectly futile, silly, and noxious worrying could be abolished.

There is worrying and worrying, and distinctions must be made between the different kinds of this affliction, according to their causes. If the cause and the consequences are alike entirely beyond your control and outside your responsibility, to worry over the affair is childish and serves no end whatever. You have to accept it, suffer it, and cheerfully make the best of it. This is obvious; yet people, grown-up persons, genuine adults, apparently sane, will, as a fact, worry over such affairs.

On the other hand, if the trouble is due to some act or omission of your own, and the consequences are to any extent avoidable or remediable by yourself, then a generous amount of worry is not misplaced, and too much worrying is better than too little. For be it remembered that individuals exist who never worry, and whose ability not to worry is due merely to a complete absence of the sense of responsibility and the sense of danger. These individuals have made a vice out of a virtue.

Between the two extremes above-mentioned an infinite variety of kinds of trouble might be indicated; they can be sorted out simply and satisfactorily on the broad principle that the less they are avoidable and remediable, the less is the excuse for worrying about them. Reflection, cogitation, planning, preparation for the worse or the worst—these things may, and probably will, be advisable or necessary in a greater or a smaller degree but beyond the proper degree they are harmful.

Large numbers of people imagine that if five grains of a medicine constitute a good remedy for a given disease, ten grains will be twice as good a remedy. The notion is false, and equally false is the notion that two hours' cogitation over a trouble will necessarily be twice as useful as one hour. One hour may yield a harvest of sagacity; two hours may degenerate into mere worrying. How is one to tell when cogitation has lasted long enough? It is not very difficult to tell.

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Take the well-known experience, with which we are all of us familiar, of waking up to a worry in the middle of the night—just before dawn is the really sinister hour. The thoughts run round and round. They recur with the periodicity of hobby-horses. Nothing will stop them; nothing will vary them; and as the brain fatigues itself so does the aspect of the affair get gloomier and gloomier until universal perdition seems to occupy the entire horizon. At this point, if you have any luck, you drop off to sleep. And when you awaken into the light of day the monstrous absurdity of the nocturnal reflections, their gross lack of balance and of perspective, fill you with a startled sense of idiocy. Well, cogitation develops into worrying when the same thoughts monotonously recur and recur. And all worrying, at whatever time it takes place, has some of the character of those night-lunacies. It is bereft of common sense; it lacks balance and perspective, and makes for mischief. To act according to its conclusions is perilous, and sometimes fatal.

Worrying is a bad habit of mind. And since habits of mind resemble bodily habits, and are formed and broken in a similar way, the problem of curing it should not be insoluble. Good habits are formed through regular discipline and broken through indulgence. Bad habits are formed through indulgence and broken by regular discipline. But habits of mind are usually less manageable than bodily habits, and that is the trouble about worrying. You can cause the body to perform certain gymnastics at a given time every day, but to exercise the same power over the mind is a different matter.

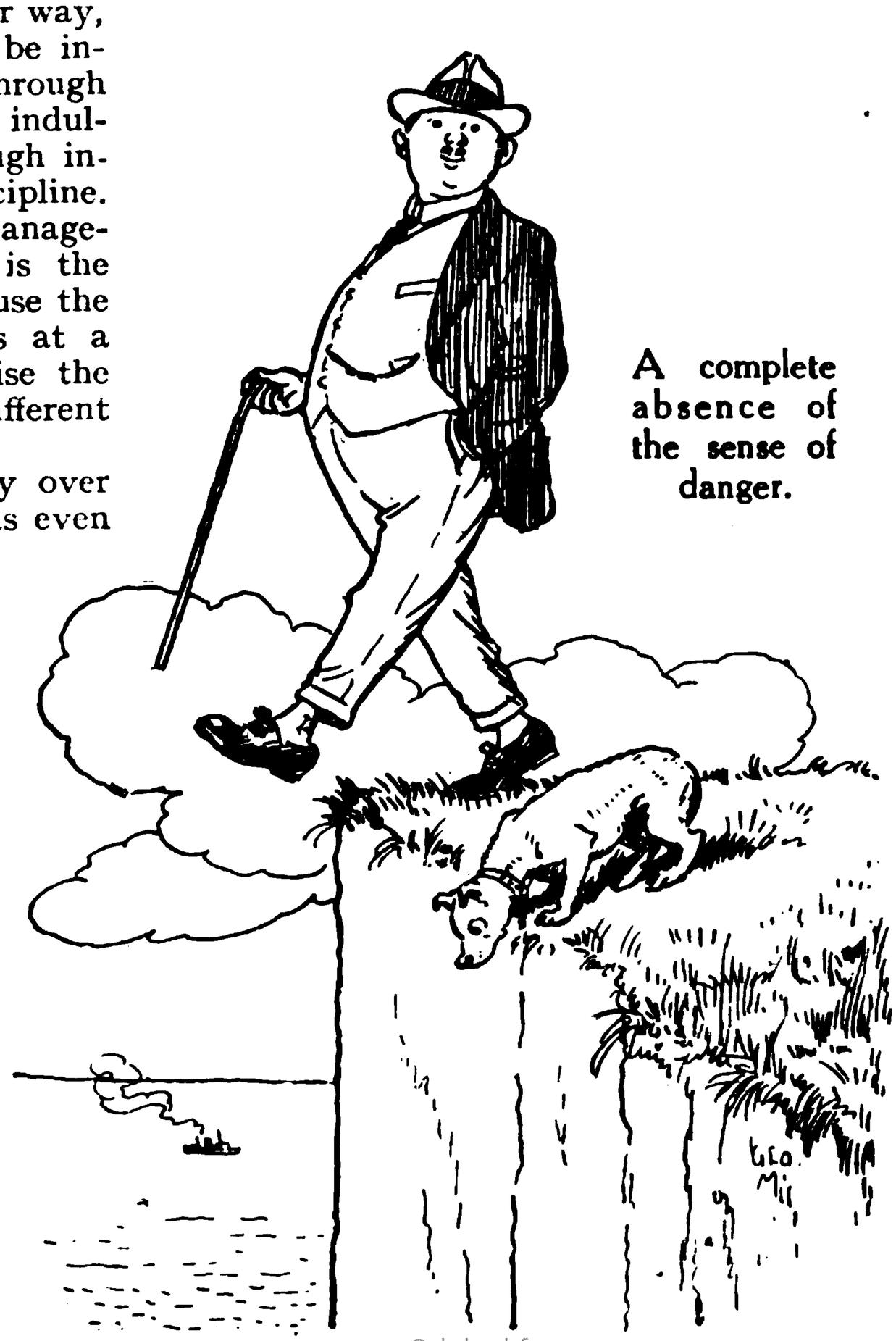
The mind has a limited monarchy over the body. What is the force that has even a very limited monarchy over the mind? Is the mind the Ego, or is the mind merely the servant of the Ego? If it is merely the servant, it is a very unreliable, capricious, inefficient, and disobedient servant. At this point one is apt to tumble into quagmires of psychological speculation, which may amuse those who are interested in intellectual bogs but which cannot usefully further the present purpose. We may as well keep carefully out of them and just assert as a dogma that the "I," the Ego, whatever it is, can and does, as a matter of daily fact, exert some sort of control over the mind. And when the need is acute the control usually increases.

The idle youth wastes months before the examination; his mind has got the bit between its teeth; but in the last month, desperately, the youth chastises and masters his mind, compelling it to concentrate for long periods on the most distasteful subjects. The point is that he forces it to concentrate.

The grown man falls in love and neglects his business, which begins to suffer gravely. At length, frightened, he drags his mind off the image of the girl, and lashes it into affairs which are to the girl as sand is to sugar.

This is perhaps an extreme form of auto-suggestion. I should not care to have to define auto-suggestion. If it means anything, it ought to mean suggesting something to oneself. But I do not see how one can suggest anything to oneself. One cannot start suggesting to oneself until the suggestion is already there, and if it is already there the trick is already done. The "I," however, can suggest particular activities to the mental apparatus, and if auto-suggestion means anything it must mean such suggestion, from the "I" to the mental apparatus.

The new Nancy school of psychological performers claims to have made real progress in the practice of both hetero-suggestion

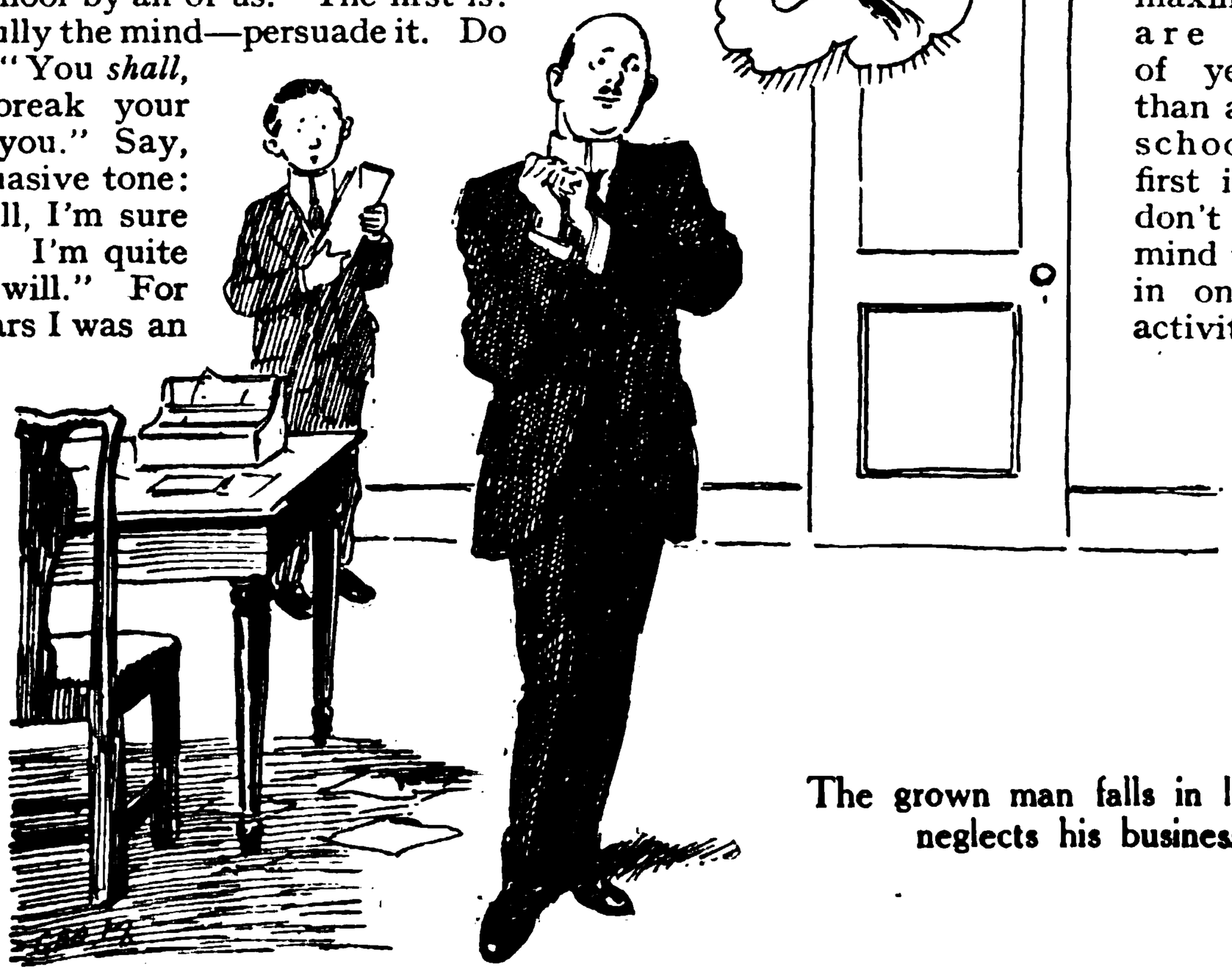


A complete absence of the sense of danger.

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(suggestion from another person) and auto-suggestion. It claims to have cured diseases, such as varicose veins, by means of suggestion. In my blunt British savagery I do not believe this story; I think the Nancy school is deceiving itself. That the immediate symptoms (but not the cause) of, say, a mild nervous headache can be permanently or temporarily removed by auto-suggestion I do believe, for I have done it myself; and I believe also that sleep can sometimes be so induced. But I would not go farther. Hypnotism is undoubtedly dangerous, and I should be surprised if auto-suggestion were not in some degree dangerous.

But there are two details of mental practice in auto-suggestion which, in my opinion, might be advantageously accepted from the Nancy school by all of us. The first is: Do not bully the mind—persuade it. Do not say: "You *shall*, or I'll break your neck for you." Say, in a persuasive tone: "You will, I'm sure you will. I'm quite sure you will." For many years I was an advocate of compulsion for the mind. I have now abandoned compulsion, owing to the arguments of the Nancy school.



The grown man falls in love and neglects his business.

The second detail has to do with the mechanical process of getting the mind to stick to one point. The mind is a greater wanderer than Ulysses was. It simply will not stay where it is put, though Heaven knows it loves to stay where it is not put and where it ought not to be. The new Nancy dodge is to repeat the suggestive phrase in a low, persuasive tone as fast as you can possibly utter it; thus has the mind no chance to wander! It is certainly a good dodge.

So, if X is your worry, you repeat *at the utmost possible speed*, in a nice, seductive, conciliating, and yet absolutely convinced voice: "You will not think about X at all. No, you will not." This device, if honestly and regularly employed, "works," and should ultimately prove to be a practically complete cure for worry.

Some, of course, will regard all this Nancy stuff as in the nature of a circus. I do not assert that they are wrong, but my impression is that they are far from being wholly right. Others will clutch at it as hypochondriacs swallow a new patent medicine. But both camps will, I hope, adopt the wisdom of two plain maxims which are thousands of years older than any Nancy school. The first is: If you don't want the mind to indulge in one sort of activity, give it something else to do. The mind will not do two things at once. When you are worrying, do not merely try not to worry; give the mind a definite task, positive, not negative. The second is: Unburden yourself to a friend, whatever the disadvantage may be. Total suppression is the worst of all evils in this matter of worrying.

In one way or another of mental gymnastics the habit of worrying can assuredly be either broken or very considerably modified. And when the break or the modification has been accomplished, the result in happiness and zest will astonish the liberated victim. This is the third great aid towards good humour.

Next month: "The Business of Education."

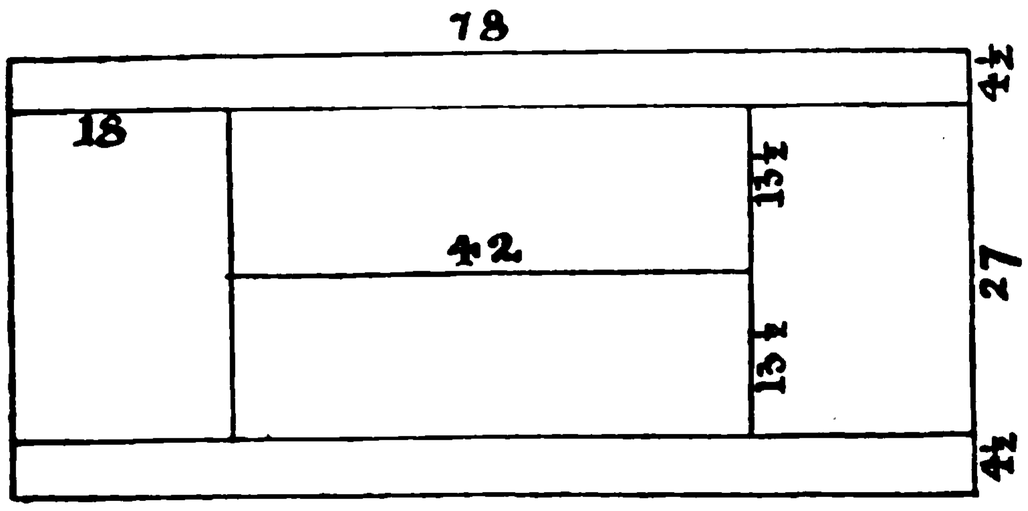
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PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

602.—MARKING A TENNIS COURT.

I AM often pointing out that good puzzles, apart from keeping the mind alert and training it to the habit of clear thinking, really teach us methods, rules, and "wrinkles" that can be applied with advantage to the ordinary affairs of life—often quite unexpectedly. Here is an example. We have often



discussed certain unicursal and route puzzles and learnt how to solve them, though they may have appeared to be more fanciful than useful. Now, a correspondent (T. A. M.) writes as follows: "The lines of our tennis court are faint and want re-marking. My marker is of such a kind that, though I can start anywhere and finish anywhere, it cannot be lifted off the lines when working without making a mess. I have therefore to go over some of the lines twice. Where should I start and what route should I take, without lifting the marker, to mark the court completely and yet go over the minimum distance twice? No doubt it has an obvious solution, but I cannot see it." I give the correct proportions of a tennis court in feet. What is the best route?

603.—TWO ANAGRAMS.

SHE asked me from NEW DOOR to make
One word; and when 'twas done,
Said I, "From WEIGHTS the letters take
And make *two* words from one."

604.—ANOTHER OLD ENIGMA.

BY Nature's law to me is given
The greatest power under heaven
The proudest monarchs I confine,
Who silently themselves resign,
And own obedience by a nod
To me, their more than demi-god.
So universal is my sway
That high and low my laws obey.
If more of me you wish to know,
Inquire not of the sons of woe,
But of the weary and the gay,
Who to me their homage pay;
Though while they in my power remain,
Should you inquire 'twill be in vain.

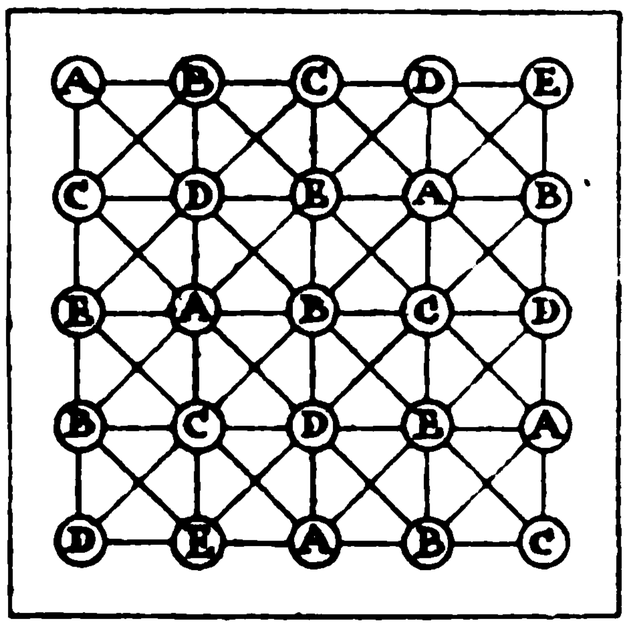
605.—THE MUDBURY WAR MEMORIAL.

THE worthy inhabitants of Mudbury in the Marsh recently erected a war memorial, and they proposed to enclose the piece of ground on which it stands with posts. They found that if they set up the posts a foot asunder they would have too few by 150, but if they placed them a yard asunder there would be too many posts by 70. How many posts had they in hand?

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

597.—THE QUINQUELITERAL.

THERE are only two possible ways of placing five similar letters without attack: one in the positions of the B's, and the others in the positions of the A's, which have the same scheme as the C's, D's, and E's. Thus the five sets can only be arranged as shown, irrespective of permutations and reflections. If we confine ourselves to cases where B is in the centre,



we may make the top line either A B C D E, or A B C E D, or A B D C E, or A B D E C, or A B E C D, or A B E D C, and we can complete each of the six boards in the same *manner* as the one shown. Any other order in the top line will only lead to reversals and reflections of arrangements already obtained. Thus, C B A E D would only give our example upside down. But the central letter may be A, B, C, D, or E. Therefore the correct answer is 5 times 6, or 30 ways in all. Note that every one of the 120 permutations of the five letters appears *twice* in some outer row, since A B C D E will occur with the D in the centre (a reflection of the above *manner* of arrangement); therefore, as every arrangement represents eight forms by reversal and reflection, 8 x 30 = 240.

598.—MISSING WORDS.

THE words in their order are LEMONS, SOLEMN, MELONS.

599.—THE FOUR CUBES.

To find two equal pairs of cubes, take any two numbers, say 4 and 5 (with their cubes, 64 and 125), where the cube of the larger must be less than twice the cube of the smaller. Then proceed as follows: 4 times $(2 \times 125 - 64) = 744$, 4 times $(64 + 125) = 756$; 5 times $(2 \times 64 - 125) = 15$; 5 times $(64 + 125) = 945$. The cubes of 744 and 756 will equal the cubes of 15 and 945. But we can divide each number by 3 and reduce to 248 and 252, and 5 and 315. These are correct measurements, in inches, for our four cubes. Knowing that rule, a little thought and trial will soon find the solution.

600.—BEHEADINGS AND CURTAILINGS.

1. Fox-ox. 2. Flute-lute. 3. Brim-rim. 4. Bark-ark. 5. Smelt-melt. 6. Arise-rise. 7. Flag-lag. 8. Amabel-Mabel-Abel. 9. Complaint-complain. 10. Covert-cover. 11. Mark-mar. 12. Hide-hid. 13. Open-ope.

601.—DISTRIBUTING NUTS.

THERE were originally 1,021 nuts. Tommy received 256; Bessie, 192; Bob, 144; and Jessie, 108. Thus the girls received 300 and the boys 400, or 100 more, and Aunt Martha retained 321.

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THE MURDERER IN THE DARK

by

F. BRITTEN AUSTIN

ILLUSTRATED BY S. SEYMOUR LUCAS

MR. TODMORDEN rose from his seat in the railway carriage; he spoke in the tones of a man who ends a discussion:—

"Well, gentlemen, this is my station, and you haven't convinced me that a man ever commits a crime unless of his own free will. I'd show no mercy to the rascal! Good night!"

Mr. Todmorden was far from being so stern, either in appearance or character, as this emphatically uttered sentiment would suggest. As his short, stout figure moved along the platform, the head thrown back and a pair of bright little eyes, set in a chubby round face, glancing sharply through his spectacles for an acquaintance to smile at, he looked—what, in fact, he was—a successful City man whose original kindness of heart had mellowed into habitual benevolence—the type of man who moves through life beaming on people who touch their caps; salutation and recognition alike instinctive, meeting each other half-way.

Affable though Mr. Todmorden was, he had his prejudices and his pride: pride centred in the practice he had built up as a family solicitor of standing and renown; prejudices directed against those unfortunates who, from choice or necessity, transgressed the social code.

In the warm light of a late summer sunset, he strolled along the suburban streets to his home. Suddenly he stopped and contemplated through his spectacles a large house a little way back from the road. A long ladder resting against the wall was the uncommon object that had attracted his attention.

"Dear me!" he said to himself. "Old Miss Hartley having the house painted again!"

Miss Hartley was one of his oldest and most valued clients. In fact, both repudiated the business term and called each other "friends." She was an elderly spinster, eccentric and wealthy; he a bachelor who could and did afford himself a whim. The long practice of watching her interests had developed a habit of affectionate protection in him. He was personally, not merely professionally, anxious on her behalf when the occasion required it.

The sight of the ladder against the wall recalled one of his most common anxieties. It was a pet grievance of his that she would persist in living alone, save for one maid, in that large house. To his mind, she offered herself as a prey to the malefactor who should chance to correlate the two facts of her wealth and her solitude.

"Tut, tut!" he said. "That ladder, now, is placed just right for a burglar. I'm sure it is. Dear me! How careless! How very careless!" He tried to measure the ladder from his remembrance of it, and, to end his doubts, returned and examined it again. The ladder rested close to a freshly-painted window-sill on the first floor.

"Dear me! dear me!" said Mr. Todmorden, genuinely perturbed. "That's the window of Miss Hartley's room!" He stood irresolute, debating whether he should ring the bell and point out the dangerous position of the ladder. A nervous fear of the old lady's smile restrained him. He knew she regarded him as an old "fusser."

He walked on again, carrying his fears.

"She is really too foolish, too foolish!" he repeated. "Living alone there—with only that stupid girl in the house! Anyone

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"That ladder is placed just right for a burglar. I'm sure it is. Dear me! How careless! How very careless!"

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might break in. They've only to walk up that ladder! And she will persist in advertising that she has valuables!" The occasion of the final clause in Mr. Todmorden's mental arraignment was a particularly fine diamond brooch the old lady wore at all times, despite his protests. If there was a sentimental reason for its continual use, she concealed it under her quiet smile. The memory of that smile irritated Mr. Todmorden. "Confound her, she's so obstinate!"

His thoughts focused themselves on that brooch with a criminal lurking in the background. Gradually, they drifted to the criminal. He amused himself by picturing types of possible burglars. Finally, forgetting his original preoccupation, he thought of an ancestor of his own—his maternal grandfather—who had been transported for a doubtful case of murder. In contrast to that squalid page of family history, self-esteem read over his own achievements. Successful, respected, an alderman, a possible knighthood in front, he had surely wiped out that black patch on his pedigree. He savoured a very pleasant sense of personal probity as he walked up the drive to his house.

He ate his solitary dinner, and revived the feeling of well-being with a bottle of his favourite port. Then Miss Hartley's brooch recurred to his mind, and was followed by a thought of the ladder which led to it, and the criminal who might climb the ladder. As he sat in his big chair in the lonely dining-room, gazing at passing thoughts rather than thinking them, the case of his maternal grandfather cropped up in his reverie. Moved by a sudden whim, he rose from his chair and took down a battered old volume of law reports. Fortified by another glass, he read through the trial of his ancestor. He finished it, and sat thoughtful for a moment, before replacing the book.

"H'm, h'm!" he said to himself. "Very doubtful! Very doubtful! Ah, well, we've travelled a long road since then!" He smiled at his own success, and went off to bed in a contented mood. That doubtful grandfather was a long way back.

IN the morning, as he walked down to the station to catch his usual train, he noticed a group of people standing on the pavement and gazing up at a house. An unreasoning anxiety gripped him. He hastened his pace. Yes—surely!—it was Miss Hartley's house which excited this unwonted interest.

He arrived among the crowd, rather out of breath.

"What is it? What is it, my man?" he demanded of a gazing spectator.

Half-a-dozen voices replied.

"It's a murder! Old Miss Hartley!"

Mr. Todmorden did not wait to hear more.

"Good gracious!" he said, as he hurried along the garden-path, and "Good gracious!" he repeated, as he rang the bell. He could not formulate a thought. He gazed, mentally, at the awful thing, stunned.

The door was opened by a policeman. Behind him stood the maidservant, white, frightened, and sobbing. She ran towards him with a cry of "Oh, sir!" but broke down, unable to utter a word.

"All right, all right, Ellen," said Mr. Todmorden, rather brusquely, pushing her aside. He addressed himself to the policeman.

"What has happened, constable? Surely not murder?"

"Yes, sir. I'm afraid so." He looked doubtfully at his questioner. "Are you one of the old lady's relatives, sir?"

"No. I'm her solicitor, and one of her oldest friends. Dear me! dear me! how terrible! Is there anyone in authority here, constable?"

"Two inspectors upstairs, sir."

"Can I see them?"

He was shown into the bedroom, and introduced himself to the police officers. They welcomed him with gravity. On the bed lay a covered figure. Mr. Todmorden drew aside the sheet and gazed upon the features of his old friend. They were marred by a bullet-hole through the forehead. He turned away, trembling, his face working with emotion. He could scarcely speak, but made the effort due to his dignity as the deceased's legal adviser.

"Any—any clue?" he asked.

"None, sir, at present," was the reply.

"Dear me! how terrible! How very terrible! She was my oldest friend"—he could not find the strength to repress his grief—"my oldest friend! Oh, it's awful, Inspector, awful! The—the wickedness of it! She hadn't an enemy." He struggled for the control of himself. "What was it—robbery?"

"No, sir—nothing seems to be tampered with. Perhaps the murderer was startled."

"When was it discovered?"

"This morning, when the maid brought in the tea. She says she heard nothing. She admits being a heavy sleeper."

"And there is nothing missing?"

"Apparently not, sir. The drawers were locked, and the keys have not been interfered with. Nothing was disturbed, in fact."

"Ah!" Mr. Todmorden was gradually getting back into his legal clearness of mind. "Has the girl looked carefully round to see if anything has disappeared?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Call her up, if you please, Officer."

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Ellen appeared, still weeping, and was bidden to look round for anything out of place. Dabbing her eyes, she examined the room carefully. Suddenly she gave a cry.

"The mistress's diamond brooch! I put it here last night!" She pointed to a tray on the dressing-table. "It's gone!"

"Good heavens!" said Mr. Todmorden. "How very curious."

The inspectors looked at him sharply.

"Does that give you a clue, sir?" asked one of them.

"No—no," he replied, rather confused. "I—the fact is, I was thinking of that brooch only last night, and of how unprotected Miss Hartley was. I have often told her so—poor woman."

"Ah!" said the inspectors, in chorus. Mr. Todmorden felt there was something suspicious in their sharply-uttered exclamation. Even to himself his explanation had sounded lame. The police officers might imagine he was shielding somebody. The consciousness of his inability to explain how very startling the fulfilment of his fears had been to him made him feel awkward.

"Of course," he said, "the murderer must have come in by the ladder."

"The ladder?" asked one of the inspectors. "I saw no ladder."

"There was certainly a ladder resting close to the sill of this window at six o'clock last night," asserted Mr. Todmorden. "The house, you will observe, is being redecorated. I noticed the ladder, and it occurred to me that a first-class opportunity was being offered to a burglar. In fact, I was on the point of calling on Miss Hartley and warning her of it. I wish I had done so!"

"H'm!" The inspector scarcely deigned to trifle with the suggestion. It could be understood that it was his professional prerogative to evolve theories. "Yes—perhaps. But I think we can explain the entrance in a more likely way," he said, mysteriously. "It is scarcely probable that the decorator's men would leave the ladder there all night, sir."

"I'm sure the rascal came up the ladder!" Mr. Todmorden's affirmation was so vehement, came so involuntarily, that it surprised himself. Why was he so positive? He felt uncomfortable. He put on a bustling important air. "Well, well, I must get up to town, as I have a very important appointment. I will look in at the station on my way home this evening. If you hear of anything during the day you might communicate with me. Here is my card."

As good as his word, he called at the police-station on his way home. The chief inspector received him.

"A very mysterious affair, Mr. Todmorden. Very mysterious!"

"It is very terrible to me," replied the old gentleman. "Miss Hartley was a very old friend. I feel myself in some way responsible. The possibility of such a tragedy actually occurred to me on my way home last night, and I might have warned her of it. I shall never forgive myself. Miss Hartley relied upon me. It is terrible to think I failed her in this supreme instance."

"You refer to the ladder," said the inspector. "We have made inquiries about that. It appears it was overlooked last night, and was fetched away by one of the decorator's men at six o'clock this morning. Undoubtedly the murderer used it. In fact, he left the window open behind him."

"I was certain of it," said Mr. Todmorden. "And there is no clue to the criminal?"

"Scarcely any. The constable on the beat reports that, at two o'clock this morning, he saw the figure of a man running along the road away from the house. That man was wearing a very light suit—possibly a flannel one. A curious dress for a burglar, I think you will admit. The constable particularly noticed that there was no sound of footsteps as the man ran. He must have been wearing rubber shoes. Unfortunately, the constable lost sight of him when he turned the corner."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Todmorden. Only half his mind had listened to the inspector's words, the other half was occupied by that curious and fairly common hallucination of a previous and identical incident. The description was oddly familiar. He seemed to know it in advance. At an intense moment of the hallucination he had a glimpsed memory of himself running, running along a road at the dead of night, running silently. He shook off the uncomfortable and absurd feeling. "Dear me! How very strange!"

The inspector was observing him narrowly.

"I suppose you cannot give us any hint that might help us, Mr. Todmorden? You know no one who bore the old lady a grudge?"

"Certainly not. She was the best and kindest of women."

"May I ask who benefits by her death?"

"She has only one relative, a nephew, who inherits everything. He is in America. I have cabled to him, and received a reply."

"Ah! So he's out of it."

"Of course, of course."

"This business of the brooch, Mr. Todmorden—it seems strange that the murderer should have taken that, and that only. He made no attempt on anything else. You know no one who had an interest in it?"

"No one. Miss Hartley wore it always. I have often expostulated with her for wearing so valuable a piece of jewellery in the

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street. Someone might have noticed it and resolved to obtain it."

"Yes, yes, of course. A very strange affair, Mr. Todmorden, very strange! I confess I cannot see light in it. Er—her affairs are quite in order, of course?"

"Quite. I keep the accounts; they are open to investigation. The name of Todmorden and Baines is a sufficient guarantee, I think," he added, with a smile. "But, of course, it is natural you should wish to make sure. You can examine the books to-morrow."

"Unnecessary, my dear sir, I'm quite certain. Of course, I am bound to ask these unpleasant questions."

"Don't apologize. I am as anxious as you are to catch the criminal. I have, in fact, a personal interest in it. Miss Hartley was so good a friend to me that I shall never rest until I have brought the scoundrel to justice. A reward may help. I will personally give a hundred pounds for his apprehension. You might have bills printed to that effect."

AS Mr. Todmorden went home, he looked years older than the man who had traversed the same ground twenty-four hours earlier. Grief-stricken though he was at the loss of his dear friend, his predominant emotion was a fierce lust for vengeance on the murderer. His fingers worked, gripping the air, as he brooded on him—the hated unknown—and his pace oscillated from fast to slow and slow to fast, as thoughts, hopeful or despondent, got the upper hand. If he could only lay hands on the rascal!

"I'll double that reward if he isn't caught within a week!" he decided. The decision comforted him.

All through his solitary dinner he brooded on the crime, and sat afterwards, for long hours, trying to think of someone who might have an urgent reason for possessing himself of that diamond brooch. He went to bed at last, baffled, weary, heartsick. Had he met the murderer on the stairs he would gladly have throttled him with his own hands.

Putting on his pyjamas, he noticed something unusual — something hard — in the pocket. Mechanically he drew out the object and looked at it. He stood as if petrified, his eyes staring, sweat breaking out on his brow.

In his hand he held Miss Hartley's diamond brooch!

He gazed at it, overwhelmed with amazement and horror. What was happening? Was he crazed? Was his mind unhinged by the event of the morning? Was this an hallucination? All that was his familiar self prayed, prayed hard, that this might be madness. Or—his instinct of self-preservation caused him to clutch at the thought—was he the victim of some atrocious trick? Impossible. Was it real? He felt the jewel—turned it so that it sparkled under the electric light.

"My God!" said Mr. Todmorden, sinking into a chair. The familiar concrete surroundings crumbled about him: were dissipated. He gazed into unfathomable mysteries.

How could the brooch have got into his pocket? Someone must have put it there! Someone! Who? Who could have come into his bedroom and put that damnatory brooch into the pocket of his pyjamas? The servants? He reviewed them swiftly. Impossible! Then who? Not—surely not—he must be going mad—not himself! It was absurd, unthinkable. He had gone to bed and slept without a dream. Or, was there a dream—a dream of running in the darkness, fast, barefoot? Nonsense! Nonsense! He did not get up in the middle of the night, walk down the street, murder his dearest friend, and come back as though nothing had happened! His mind flashed on the portrait of Miss Hartley, and he felt the cruel irony of the supposition, though he himself made it. Then who—who? A wave of superstition swept over him. Devils? It was inexplicable. He revolted at something obscure within him, something which pointed a finger to the accusing brooch, which whispered the inexorable corollary in his ear. No! No! It could not be! He was innocent; he was conscious, instinctively conscious, of his innocence.

But was he?

The something whispered persistently. An idea came to him—the proof. He went quickly across to a drawer in his dressing-table and took out his revolver. With trembling hands he examined the charges. One had been exploded! Had devils fired his revolver also? Oh, Heaven! He thought he was going to faint.

How? Why? How? Why? These two questions besieged him incessantly, battering at his crumbling mind. He clasped his head in his hands, rocking to and fro on his chair.

Madness? Madness came in these sudden attacks, so an imp of thought assured him. He was mad! Mad!

For hours he strode up and down the room, wrestling with demons in the night. He had killed his dearest friend. He had no doubt of it, the realization filled him with an agony of horror and grief. He would gladly have died rather than have done this awful thing. And how had he done it? How had he committed this crime without the faintest remembrance of it? It was

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In his hand he held Miss Hartley's diamond brooch! He gazed at it, overwhelmed with amazement and horror.

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impossible! He had not—then he looked at the brooch, and knew he had. It was monstrous, unthinkable—but true.

At length, physically exhausted, he threw himself on the bed and continued the struggle—striving, striving to see light in this appalling mystery. At last he fell asleep.

He woke and looked around him. He was in a dark room. That was strange. He knew he had left the light on. He was standing up. He held something in his hand—a book. Puzzled, he put out his hand to where the switch of the electric light should be. It was not there. In a new terror that surged up, obliterating the older horrors of the night, he groped along the wall for the switch, and found it. The place sprang into light. He was in the dining-room! In his hand he held the report of his grandfather's trial. The truth flashed on him.

He was a somnambulist!

WITH a wild cry he sank down in a swoon.

When he returned to consciousness, the electric lamps were yellow patches in the sunlight which filled the room. He struggled to his feet and switched them off. He stood for some moments unsteadily, trying to adjust his mind to these unfamiliar surroundings to remember—to remember something. Then his ghastly situation rushed on his mind, vivid with a new light. He was a criminal! He risked discovery, ruin! He heard people moving about—servants. They must not suspect him of any abnormality. Haggard, trembling, giddy, an old, old man, he tottered up the stairs to his own bedroom.

Escape—escape from the consequences of his involuntary crime—was his master impulse. He was no longer the benevolent Mr. Todmorden; he was a vile criminal, haunted by Furies. He must not be found out. He sobbed in self-pity, and strove for the control of his faculties. He must think—must think. The brooch must be got rid of. He would drop it over London Bridge. Yes, that was the way. The brooch gone, beyond all possibility of recovery, who would suspect him? He had not suspected himself. He breathed more freely, feeling himself already safe. He would triple that reward. That would avert suspicion.

But suppose there was some trace of the crime on him? He must make sure. The inspector's story of the light-suited fugitive came into his mind—his pyjamas! That fugitive must have been himself in his pyjamas. He had again that flashed memory of running, running silently. He doubted no longer, but examined the pyjamas on his body, searching for a spot of blood, for any sign that might betray him. Yes! There on the trouser-leg was a smear of stone-coloured paint—the paint on Miss Hartley's window-sill. He must get those pyjamas away, destroy them—somehow. He thought of half-a-dozen plans, and rejected all. Everything he thought of seemed to proclaim his guilt. The problem was still unsolved when another danger occurred to him. His revolver contained a discharged cartridge. He must reload it. Feverishly he did so. As he clicked the chambers into place there was a knock at the door. He grasped the revolver and listened in a sudden panic. The knock was repeated. He tried to speak and could not. At last words came.

"What is it?"

"Please, sir, a man from the police-station wants to speak to you at once."

He tried hard to reply in his normal tones.

"All right. Tell him I'll be down soon."

"Please, sir, he says he can't wait. It's very urgent."

Discovery? No! Impossible—as yet! He kept a tremor out of his voice by an effort.

"Show him into my dressing-room."

Mr. Todmorden thought swiftly for a vivid second. That smear of paint must be concealed. He slipped on a dressing-gown. Then he caught sight of his revolver on the table, and, on a blind impulse, dropped it into his pocket. He took a long breath. Now—was there anything suspicious about him? He opened his dressing-gown and surveyed himself in the mirror. Yes!—there was a button gone from his pyjama jacket! Where had he lost that button? He would have given anything for certainty. But he must not keep the police waiting. He girded his gown about him and went into the dressing-room.

The chief inspector awaited him. An expression of surprise came into the officer's face.

"I have had a bad night, Inspector," said the old gentleman, noticing the look, and feeling his haggard appearance needed explanation.

The inspector condoled with him.

"I am pleased to say we have found a slight clue to the criminal, Mr. Todmorden," he said, looking again sharply at the old gentleman. Mr. Todmorden felt he quailed under the glance. "It's a button. And the curious thing is, it is a pyjama button."

"Yes?" Mr. Todmorden's mouth went dry.

"Funny wear for a burglar—pyjamas," commented the inspector. "Don't you think so, sir?"

"Very curious." Mr. Todmorden recognized the urgent necessity for a normal voice. "Yes; very curious." He must talk—say something! "By the way, Inspector, I've been thinking about that reward. I've decided to triple it. I—I am determined to catch the scoundrel."

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The inspector stepped quickly to the old gentleman and flung aside his dressing-gown.

"Very kind of you, sir. I hope we shall ask you for the cheque. We're on the road, anyway. We've only got to find out where those pyjamas came from, and, quite likely, we shall get on his track."

"Yes, yes; quite so." Would the interview never end? Mr. Todmorden agonized.

"If we can only find some buttons like this, we can make a start. There are differences even in pyjama buttons, you know, sir. I have compared it with mine, but it doesn't tally. Would you mind comparing it with yours, sir? We must not neglect any chance of getting a clue. Allow me!"

He stepped quickly to the old gentleman and flung aside his dressing-gown. The buttons, with the hanging thread of their missing fellow, were revealed. Triumph flashed in the inspector's face.

"James Henry Todmorden, I——"

Mr. Todmorden jumped back from his grasp. With a sharp cry he drew his hand swiftly from his pocket. There was a report, and he dropped to the floor.

The inspector looked at his lifeless body.

"I thought the old rascal did it," he said, smiling grimly. "A well-planned bit of work, though."

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The CHAP UPSTAIRS

by

ROLAND PERTWEE

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W·E·WEBSTER

JOHN HARVEY was preternaturally old, but really quite young. He did not belong to the type that sits on the front seat of an omnibus. His nature was too retiring. He sat behind and did not complain when the flying sparks from the pipes and cigarettes of the gallant and debonair passengers in front took refuge in his eyes. He was too forbearing. His wardrobe spoke his character in simple phrase. It intoned the word "sobriety." Within were fifteen suits but only two suitings. His ties were numerous, but in pattern identical. They had no pattern. On a shelf in his dressing-room were seventeen pairs of shoes as closely resembling one another as the members of a temperance society.

He had got into a groove.

His favourite sitting-room in the flat was lined with bookcases from floor to ceiling. He read everything, good, bad, or indifferent. To him books filled the place adventure occupies in the mind of the average man of thirty-five. Also they were his friends—his enemies—his source of enlightenment or despair. He was on excellent terms with a number of sturdy figures in literature—men and women too—who in real life would have paralysed him into instant speechlessness. Speech was always a difficulty with John Harvey. Words are winged, and, alas! he did not possess skill as a fowler. When occasion arose and he had the will to talk, behold his sentences died still-born. But he could talk uncommonly pleasant stuff to persons who had no interest in listening. Men who laid carpets or cleaned windows—women whose mouths were full of pins while they fitted loose covers to chairs and sofas—to such as these he was eloquent. But of what avail?

Silence makes for loneliness, and he was desperately lonely, although he would never admit it even to himself.

To allay the poignancy of loneliness he indulged in a secret vice, and, like all other vices, it grew upon him and was his master. He became a devotee of the "movies." Secretly at first, but later with growing brazenness. The movies became part of his life—far more readily than the theatre could have done. The lowered lights gave rise to private thoughts, and it was pleasant to him to see, in this mysterious art, the entire gamut of emotions being ranged without a single spoken word. It provided comforting reflections—it offered a welcome and a refuge to the inarticulate.

Particularly was he attached to pictures of unhappy foundlings who married into very well-furnished rooms. Their courageous ascent from melancholy and uncharitable surroundings to an approved finale in which nothing but their curls could be seen, storming against some good man's breast, was an unfailing source of delight to John Harvey. It sent him home to his lonely flat feeling right with the world. It was only the screen maiden whose eyes he dared to meet. In their company his courage was immense. He could look them squarely in the face, even when to express the immensity of their emotions the projector had need to multiply their normal proportions by eight diameters. In real life a "close up" would have filled him with terror—but at the cinema he accepted it unflinchingly, and his sympathies were aroused in direct ratio to the grief or gladness reproduced. He found the spectacle of eyes that measured three feet across and shed half-pint tears was particularly moving. But these intimacies taught him no lesson of

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valour the which he might apply to everyday life. In female company he remained as self-conscious and retiring as heretofore. In a crowded railway carriage he would only offer his seat to women of advanced middle age, for he did not dare to meet the grateful or reproachful glances of the fair. Here was a failure of courage, not of chivalry, since the agony he suffered while remaining seated drove needles of remorse into his very foundations.

The flat in which he lived was comfortable and expensive, but not so stoutly built as to exclude all neighbourly sounds. Thus, when the youngest daughter of the tenant below, inspired by hopes of a musical career, embarked upon five-finger exercises, her occasional failures to strike the right note were as audible in John Harvey's study as in her mother's drawing-room. If both windows chanced to be open at the same time he could hear the words passing between pupil and teacher—the slaps provoked and the shrill protests.

"*Mon Dieu!* 'ow must I often tell you to keep up the wrists?"

Whack!

"Woaow! You're a horrid beastly beast! I hate you! I hate all mam'zelles! I wish I was dead."

Tears.

Then John Harvey would close the window, because he did not like tears.

But the sounds that came from above were very different. Quiet footfalls — bath-water — chair springs that squeaked luxuriously — softly closed doors—and never any voices.

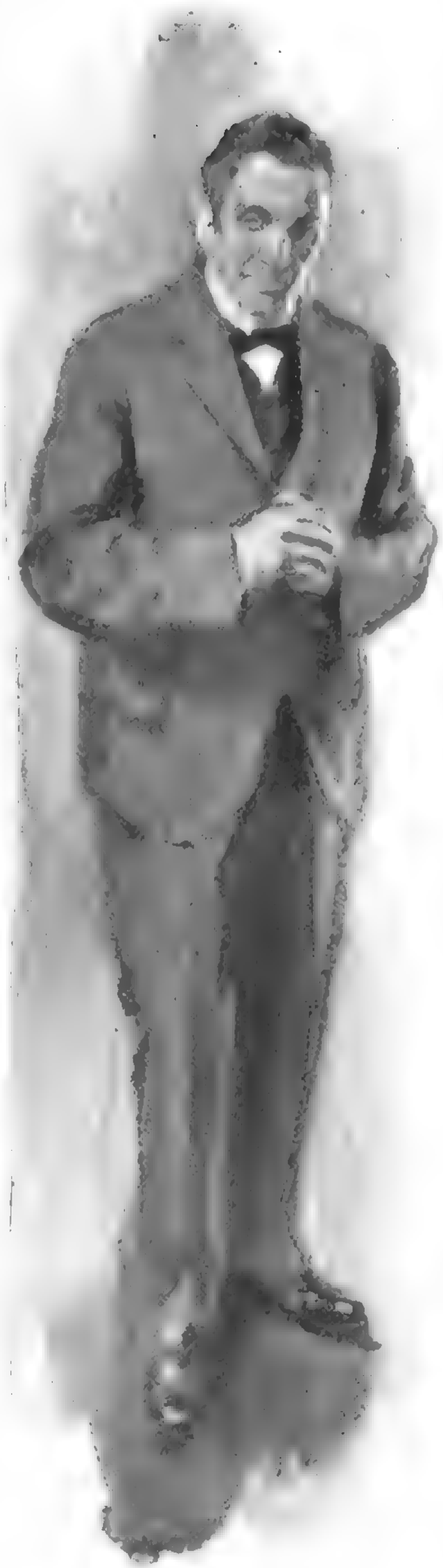
John Harvey decided that the tenant above must be a man after his own heart. Their hours of rising and of retirement synchronized, and in all sorts of silent ways their lives seemed cut from a single pattern. He had never seen the man—never tried to see him—but he devoted an extraordinary amount of time to thinking and making up stories about him. They were attractive stories too, which invested the mysterious unknown with honour and with virtue.

Often John Harvey would suddenly cease reading, cock an ear at the ceiling and listen, with smiling content, to the faint sounds which percolated through from above. It eased his solitude to reflect that a fellow-creature was occupying just such a room as his—following, perhaps, the same pursuits—killing, perhaps, the same idle, unproductive hours—sharing, perhaps, the same queer and wistful loneliness.

"I've half a mind to drop in on the fellow one of these days," mused John. "Still, I suppose I never shall."

"Half a mind" is a retrogressive state. It seldom has been known to mount a flight of steps.

John Harvey was the despair of Roberts, his man-servant. Roberts was an heirloom—part of the personal estate of John Harvey's father. He started his career as a small, silk-hatted, powdered-haired youth, who rode with folded arms on the box of the Harvey barouche, and rose at last to the post of confidential valet. Unlike his son, the late Mr. Harvey was a bit of a blade—he had a roving eye—a



"I am speaking as a man who has been married himself on sundry occasions."

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pretty taste for neckwear in Spitalfields silk —and an astonishing capacity for remaining unmoved in the presence of mixed drinks.

That John had failed to follow in his father's footsteps was matter for lasting reproach with Roberts. He did not understand such continence, and could not tolerate the spectacle of youth wasted without excesses. As a man who held somewhat Oriental views on the subject of women, he felt called upon to protest. He had done so before, but this did not discourage a fresh attempt.

HE chose an afternoon when Spring was peeping over the edge of its winter coverlet and the sparrows in the square below were celebrating the occasion with appropriate song.

"Begging your pardon, sir, but to see you sitting here day after day—growing older, sir, and nothing happening, sir—breaks my heart, sir."

John was nothing if not oblique.

"Roberts," he replied, "I've a fancy I should like a crumpet for tea."

"I'll look to it, sir, though I believe them to be out of season. But as—— "

"An Easter cake would do," said John.

Roberts drew a deep breath.

"I was about to remark, sir—— "

John fidgeted.

"Surely this is very poor coal they are sending us."

"Very poor, sir. To claim the privilege of many years' service, it does seem a pity to me, sir, you spend so much of your time alone."

John raised his head sharply and listened.

"Yes, sir ? "

John shook his head.

"No—no, I thought I heard the chap who lives in the flat above—but it wasn't."

He picked up a poker and stirred the embers in the grate.

Roberts stuck to his guns.

"I had the offer to-day of a puppy, sir. Very companionable beasts, puppies — I thought, sir, you might fancy a puppy ? "

"No, just a crumpet, thanks," said John. "Nothing more."

It was hopeless to argue with such a man, but the gallant Roberts made a final effort.

"Properly speaking, sir, woman is man's true companion. I am speaking again on privilege, and as a man who has been married himself on sundry occasions."

John Harvey shivered protestingly—the Mormonish characteristics of his servant had always provided him with uneasy sensations.

"I dare say all that is very modern and true," he replied; "but I find the subject disturbing."

"It does a gentleman good to be disturbed, sir."

John checked the interruption with a raised forefinger.

"The world, as I see it, is divided into two classes—men who live for themselves, and men who share themselves with the other sex. They might be classified under the headings Bibliophiles and Polygamists. As to which is the more ideal state I would be reluctant to decide, since for my own part I know nothing about women and have never had the temerity to investigate my loss."

Roberts wound up the argument with an eighteenth-century ring.

"Well, sir, it's my opinion that a man can't, properly speaking, call himself a man till he's drunk three bottles at a sitting and had his arm round the waists of a dozen wenches."

Scenting interruption and banishment, he proceeded, swiftly: "It's my motto, sir, and it was your father's before me. 'Cups and kisses—Live hard and die game.'"

"Disgusting," said John Harvey, sternly. "Go away, and never come back in that frame of mind again."

"Begging your pardon, sir," said Roberts, and retired fighting.

As he reached the door an electric bell sounded, followed by a timid knock.

"I am out," said John, and disappeared behind the covers of a gigantic volume of Burton's "Arabian Nights." In the circumstances it was an unhappy choice of literature. A particularly lurid paragraph catching his eye drove him hastily to restore the book to its place in the shelves.

A shaft of late afternoon sunlight pricked a pattern of Spring upon the maroon walls—caught the facets of a cut-glass bowl and blew a spray of rainbows across the ceiling.

The bell rang again, and presently Roberts returned. He said:—

"Sir, there's—— "

"I told you I was out," replied John.

"A young lady."

"I am still out, Roberts."

"She wishes to see you, sir—seems to expect to see you."

"Expect ? Roberts, I am more than ever out."

"Very good, sir, but I'm afraid she'll be disappointed."

John hesitated.

"Who is this young lady ? " he asked.

Roberts said he had no idea. Thought she was from the country—had that wistful look of a country girl.

"H'm ! " said John. "I don't like to send her away. Roberts, do you think I should be safe in seeing this young person ? "

Roberts's smile was paternal.

"I think it would do you good, sir."

John Harvey looked up for guidance, and there were such a lot of rainbows on the ceiling.

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Stammering awkwardly, he stumbled back a few paces—bumped into a bookcase, and stood aghast. The girl, rather breathless and blinking her eyes very fast, presented an astonishing picture.

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"Show her in," said he.

He was quite unprepared for what was to follow. He had risen with the vague intention of securing a large book behind which he might retire in case of need. He never did look where he was going: not a week in the year went by but that he ran into a lamp-post, the back of a cart, or some other obstruction—it was the penalty of watching his feet rather than their direction. Roberts's announcement: "Miss Mary Merrow," must have synchronized with the girl's entrance. She came in with a sort of run, and John, who was not fitted with efficient brakes, walked straight into her.

It was a most unfortunate introduction.

Stammering awkwardly, he stumbled back a few paces—bumped into a bookcase, and stood aghast.

Roberts had gone out and closed the door.

In the centre of the room stood Mary Merrow, rather breathless, and blinking her eyes very fast indeed.

She presented an astonishing picture. It would be difficult to describe what.

She had a great deal of hair—wayward and curly—which was enjoying a riot beneath an absurd little Mercury cap. Her skirt was very short—she wore very large black boots and white stockings, which rucked and stood in urgent need of suspendering. Round her neck was a ridiculous fur boa, with the ends hanging down behind. It looked more like a compress. She had a white blouse with a blue rosette pinned to the left breast, and a pair of carefully-mended white cotton gloves. In her left hand she carried, by a ring that protruded from the top, a large square parcel, done up in American cloth. The conformation of this parcel and the ring by which it was held suggested the accommodation of a wild beast in captivity.

The girl's expression was baffling—at the same time familiar. It contained a happy mixture of expectation and awe. She did not appear to be in any way embarrassed by the oddness of her attire; on the contrary, she seemed quite satisfied about that.

JOHN HARVEY was thunderstruck—he could not believe his senses. He touched the bookcase to reassure himself that he was in his own study and not at the cinema. For the first time in his life he realized the meaning of a "film descending on the eyes." It was the only explanation. He had seen Mary Pickford in "Daddy Long Legs," "Pollyanna," "Soapsuds," and a score of other screen plays. Secretly, too, he had loved her. As we know, the spectacle of beauty arrayed in rags and her father's boots had never failed to touch him with romance. But as a prosaic and practical young man of sane convictions, he had never believed such characters had real existence—that lovely orphans with a passion for tamed rabbits, and with stockings that refused to keep up, had any being outside the range of the cinema. The discovery of his mistake was staggering.

She stood in the middle of the room blinking and breathing very fast.

Something would have to be done. John took a grip on himself and spoke.

"I—er—Miss Merrow—that is to say—how do you do?"

"Thank you very much," said Mary, as artless as you please.

It was difficult.

"Oh!" said John. "I see. Um! Please forgive me—I er—wasn't for the moment expecting—that is—er—you wish to see me?"

"Yes, please." She nodded.

Her simplicity gave him a measure of self-confidence.

"Well, here I am—at least, I think so." The sentence ended there. He started a fresh one. "Do you sit down—I mean will—won't you sit down?"

And again Mary said "Thank you very much."

Dash it! The girl talked like a sub-title.

He put a chair for her and took another himself, announcing as he sat down:—

"My name is John Harvey."

"Yes, isn't it," said she.

Assuming she had regarded his name as an observation on the weather, he politely subscribed:—

"Very, for the time of year."

"I know," said Mary.

She had pulled off her gloves and was rolling them into a ball. Her hands were surprisingly smooth and white. John marvelled at that. He found himself watching them.

She it was who made the next remark.

"Have you seen lots?"

"Seen lots?" he repeated, dully.

"Wives," she answered.

He presumed it was one of those modern jokes or catches. He knew the one about "Isobel necessary on a bicycle," but "Lot's wife" was new to him. It was only civil to reply in kind.

"No," he said; "she was turned into a pillar of salt before I was born."

His humour was wasted, however, for Mary was occupied staring at the decorations of the room. She did not seem to hear. She had a pleased smile about her lips. To cure himself of noticing these details, John assumed a business-like air.

"You wished to see about—er——"

"About the situation, please."

He screwed up his forehead.

"The situation?"

"Yes, please."

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"Whose situation?"

"Yours."

"But I haven't one," he replied. "I have a position of sorts, but no situation."

"The one you offered," she explained.

"I didn't, did I?"

"Advertised for."

"My dear young lady, I've never written an advertisement in my life."

"But you have," said Mary. "I brought it with me."

She started rummaging in the pocket of her skirt.

"I saw it on a piece of paper that Mrs. Carter—she's the old lady who keeps the all-sorts shop at Ponder's End—it's a post-office too, and you can buy string there, and buttons, and there are bottled sweets in the window—greengage bounders—bull's-eyes—clove balls, and Pevensey humbugs. Ponder's End is in the country—it's where I live, and very pretty."

John Harvey was beginning to feel dizzy.

"I may be unusually dense," he said, "but were all these details printed on this piece of paper to which you refer?"

"Oh, no," said Mary, shaking her curly head so hard that the little Mercury cap fell off and lay unnoticed on the floor. "It was a piece of newspaper, and was wrapped round some Demerara sugar I bought, because the blue bag had a hole in the corner and was leaking. It's in my pocket somewhere. I cut out the advertisement with my scissors—at least they aren't really my scissors—but then no scissors are anybody's really own scissors—are scissors?"

A man's nerves need to be in good order if they are to remain under control after such an utterance. John Harvey stumbled to his feet and made pretence of looking for his glasses, mumbling as he did so:—

"Perhaps you would be good enough to convey to me the substance of this mysterious advertisement." And, as though it were the simplest thing in the world, she answered:—

"You advertised for a wife, and I thought perhaps I would do."

John Harvey knocked over a pyramid of books and upset a vase of tulips. The spilled water trickled into his shoe and calmed him.

Mary had come to her feet to make her announcement, and was picking out the creases in her blouse, smoothing her skirt, and generally presenting herself to the best advantage. The ingenuousness of her actions was inconceivable.

"Good heavens!" gasped John. "Show me this advertisement at once."

A mere glance at the cutting was enough to allay his fears. He turned to Mary with a gasp of relief.

"This is a mistake," he exclaimed. "You've made a serious mistake. The advertiser's address is No. 9, Melbourne Court—mine is No. 7. You can see for yourself I don't want a wife. Certainly not a newspaper wife."

But Mary did not move. The glad expectancy died out of her face—her mouth went down at the corners, and her chin dropped.

"Will you please tell me what I ought to do?" she pleaded.

He shook his head.

"I really don't know. I—I have very little experience in these matters."

"Should I go up to the flat above and ask there?"

Strange that the bare thought of such a thing should have put him out of temper.

"Certainly not," he replied, "unless you know the man who lives there."

"But I don't. Do you?"

"Not personally. I've heard him moving about, but I've never seen him."

"But he wants a wife," said Mary, "and as I've come all this way——"

John Harvey put out a restraining hand.

"My dear young lady, I forbid you to go about from door to door being a wife at every one of them. It—it isn't decent."

He was surprised at his own valour—so, apparently, was Mary. She raised her eyes with a look of submissive admiration.

"What must I do, then?"

HE pointed at the chair and bade her sit down again. She was oddly willing to obey. As she marched towards it the absurd feather boa fell off and revealed the gentle lines of her throat and shoulders. The absence of the boa and the little Mercury hat made a remarkable difference to her appearance. She was beginning to look less like a picture and more like a human. But for the shortness of her skirt—the domino effect of boots and stockings—and a totally ridiculous piece of ribbon that imprisoned her hair in a knot at the top of her head, she might have passed muster in any company. It was as though a latent homogeneous sense was superimposing upon the characteristics of Los Angeles the simpler seeming of South Kensington. Already she had ceased to appear out of place in John Harvey's flat, a fact which he recognized with uneasiness and alarm.

He cleared his throat.

"Sit down," he said, "and let us consider what is best to be done."

"Yes, but it isn't fair to take up your time," Mary persisted. "You don't want a wife."

He hastened to assure her that this was so.

"No, you don't," she repeated, pathetically. "Do you?"

"I have already told you I do not," he replied.

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"But *he* does," said Mary, with a nod at the ceiling.

"Then he must go without," said John Harvey. "A man who has the effrontery to insert such an advertisement has no right to expect applicants. It's a shameful proceeding."

"But if he was lonely?" Mary suggested.

"That has nothing to do with it," he answered, with heat. "I am very disappointed in the man who lives upstairs—and I had formed such an agreeable opinion of the fellow, too."

"Had you—why?"

He turned to answer. The knot of ribbon had disappeared from the top of her head. Her hair, with its crooked side parting, had fallen serenely over her ears. The change it wrought in her was magical, and so surprised John that he lost track of what he was about to say.

"Won't you have some tea?" he said. "You're sure to be tired after travelling—it makes people tired. Do have some tea. There's a crumpet—I know there's a crumpet. We could share the crumpet if you care for crumpets."

Mary looked so pleased.

"I like crumpets," she nodded. "They ring bells for crumpets, the same as for weddings."

ALL conversational roads between the sexes lead to, or away from, the altar. To cover his embarrassment, John Harvey rang a bell—for tea. Roberts's satisfaction on receiving the order was too obvious to be tolerated. He inquired whether he should secure the services of a second crumpet.

"Do," said John, severely. And then, with an effort to relax, he remarked, "Are you aware, Roberts, that they ring bells for crumpets, the same as for muffins?"

"Weddings," said Mary, correctively, and Roberts retired with a smile.

A silence followed Roberts's departure, broken at last by Mary.

"If I'm to stop, may I please change my shoes? I brought another pair, in case there was a party."

John murmured an inaudible assent, and went and looked out of the window. Night was falling, and the window glass had the impertinence to reflect the room and its occupants. He could not avoid seeing what happened. Mary opened the parcel she had brought, and it was a bird-cage with a pair of slippers inside it. She sat on the floor with her back towards him, and presently he saw her take out the slippers and put the deplorable boots and the pair of white stockings into the bird-cage. This done, she again wrapped it in the piece of American cloth, stood up, and shook out the folds of her skirt. By some astonishing process it seemed to have increased its length by four inches.

The reflection in the glass revealed a perfectly normal and very attractive young lady, simply clad in a white blouse, a black skirt, black silk stockings, and black satin shoes. The rosette had disappeared altogether.

"I've finished," she announced, and turned for his inspection. "It was kind of you to ask me to tea."

He was too confused to talk sense.

"Tea is not a kindness," he stammered. "I gravely doubt if it is even a courtesy."

Mary shook her head at him.

"Do you always talk round the corner in that funny way?" she demanded.

"Really, I don't know. I have never been round the corner to see."

"And do you live here all alone?"

He admitted the charge of solitude, but added that he had his books for company.

"No friends?" she queried.

"Very few."

She sighed.

"I haven't any friends either. I'm very lonely too."

At which he hastened to reply:—

"I never said a word about being lonely."

"But it is lonely to live all by oneself with nothing but books."

He refused to be drawn, and she proceeded:—

"Still, I suppose in a great big place like London one can't really be lonely—and in a great big place like these flats one can't be lonely either. There must be something very sociable about living in flats."

The denial came from him in spite of himself.

"You're entirely wrong. There is probably no more lonely existence in the world than living in a flat."

And, in answer to the surprise she revealed:—

"You wouldn't understand that because you come from the country, where everyone knows everyone else, and everyone is part of everyone else. But here in London one is only part of oneself—often quite a small part, too."

Tea appeared, which was tiresome—until Roberts disappeared.

"Would you like me to pour out?" asked Mary.

"If you would," said John. "Thanks."

Strange how pleasant it was to watch a woman performing this simple feat. He was quite captivated, and followed the movements of her wrist and fingers with a curious sense of basking. The experience was so novel. As she passed his cup their eyes met.

"Do go on talking," she said.

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"Ah, we were discussing loneliness, were we not?"

"Yes."

"You wouldn't understand how it feels to live with people to right and left—people above you and below—about whom you know nothing. You meet them, perhaps, in the lift—on the stairs—hear their voices in laughter or raised in argument, and yet they're strangers. It's queer, isn't it?"

She nodded sympathetically.

"And you don't even know the chap—the man who lives upstairs?"

"No, he's a mystery to me."

"Ah, well," said Mary, practically, "I don't expect you want to know him."

John Harvey put down his cup with an air of decision.

"It's curious you should say that—you're wrong. I do. I want to know him very much. Until—until to-day his life has interested me extraordinarily."

He seemed reluctant to proceed, but the kindliness in Mary's eyes persuaded him.

"In some curious way I feel there is a bond of union between us. Every morning he gets up at the same time as I do, and he has his bath at the same time as I have mine. I actually enjoy hearing the water splash when he turns on his tap—enjoy it. It gives me a solid sense of companionship."

He caught a smile flickering at the corners of her mouth and stopped abruptly.

"You are laughing at me. I can hardly blame you."

"But I wasn't—I wasn't, really," said Mary. "Do go on."

SO he went on, and he told of the delight he had to hear the waste water go plonking down the pipe outside his bathroom window.

"It gurgles away so merrily as I rub myself down with a towel. In a way I think it hyphenates his mysterious existence with mine."

Mary nodded appreciatively.

"Yes, and then——?" she said.

"And then he walks back to his bedroom. I imagine he must have linoleum in the hall."

"Why?"

"Because you can hear his footfalls so distinctly. Light footfalls they are, and, absurdly enough, I try to keep step. Left, right—left, right! But I never succeed, I never can step short enough. Then, click! The bedroom door shuts and a heavy pile carpet muffles all the rest. We shut our bedroom doors at the same instant every morning—only he shuts his gently and I bang mine."

"Why?" she asked again.

"Because I think if I bang mine he'll bang his, and so we shall contrive some kind of early morning greeting. Bang—bang. 'Top of the morning to you, sir, whoever you may be.' Did you ever hear a stupider idea than that?"

"I think it's rather pathetic—very pathetic." And, although there was obviously no reason for them, a hint of tears glistened in her eyes.

"Pathetic?" repeated John. "I fail to see where the pathos comes in."

"So far as I can see," she returned, "it never goes out. Oh, it's very pathetic that anyone could have so little interest in life that they listen to a few poor footsteps overhead—some soapy water splashing down a pipe, and try to get someone they don't know to bang a door. It's very pathetic indeed."

"I wonder," said John. "Perhaps it is."

For the first time he looked at her without conscious uneasiness.

"Do you know, it has been extraordinarily pleasant to me to have met you in this rather unconventional way. I—er—I've never spoken to a woman with any comfort before."

"Haven't you?" said Mary.

He shook his head.

"Oh, well," she said, jumping to her feet, "I think I'd better be going."

He stretched out a hand to delay her.

"But not upstairs," he pleaded.

She hesitated—half-hurt—half-doubtful. Then:—

"Well—if—if you say I mustn't."

"Ah, that's good-natured of you," he warmly applauded. "I'm sure these rash marriages are a great mistake. Would you, I wonder, let me drive you as far as the station in my car? It would be a real pleasure."

"I suppose it would," she acknowledged, ruefully. Then a sudden twinkle showed in her eyes. She beckoned him to approach.

"I say, do you think, from what you've heard of him—the chap upstairs could have been pleased with me?"

She raised her chin—their faces were only a few inches apart. It was John Harvey's first experience of a "close up," and it shook him to the bone.

"I think it's exceedingly probable," he replied, huskily.

Mary Merrow backed a pace with a ripple of pleased laughter. The sound of it—the sex of it—awoke something elemental in John Harvey's nature that had never proved its being before. A sudden fury possessed him, and he stamped across the room to the door, dragging his cuffs free of his wrists.

"And I think I'll go upstairs," he cried, "and tell that fellow precisely what I think of a man who acts as he has acted."

"Oh! please don't," she implored.

"I feel it a public duty. A man has no right to take short cuts to the state of Holy Matrimony."

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He was working himself up nobly.

"Yes, but I was just as bad."

"Nothing of the kind—with you it's entirely different."

"Oh, is it?" said Mary, with the strangest smile. "Is it? Oh!"

The last "Oh!" sounded peculiarly satisfied.

He turned—came back—and took her hand in his.

"Are you really so keen on this marrying business?"

"I think everybody ought to be married," she said. "I think it's rather silly not to be married when you can be, and it's certainly very sad not to be, when you can't be."

He sighed, and her hand dropped from his.

"I suppose women look at things in a different way."

"Sometimes they have to," she answered, with her smile again. "You see, I haven't any bath water running down a pipe outside my window."



"What ever are you doing?" the girl demanded. "About this time," he

The words were spoken innocently enough, but they had the strangest effect on John Harvey. He swivelled round and looked at her—his hands came up from his sides and floated about in the air as though they were trying to find something—he seemed to be drawn towards her. It was only by a miracle he saved himself and—dived for the door.

"Roberts," he cried, "I want a taxi."

But Mary did not move. Her brows had come down a trifle in something resembling a frown.

"Not for me," she said; "I'm going upstairs."

The sentence rang with a note of desperate resolve.

John Harvey turned and faced her, with clenched hands. Then, with unexpected rapidity, he whipped off his coat.

"What ever are you doing?" the girl demanded.

"About this time," he answered, "the chap who lives upstairs generally comes in and sits on a chair that has a squeaky spring. I—too—am going upstairs."

The meaning was unmistakable.

"I shouldn't," said Mary. "He's sure to be late to-night."

"Why do you say that?"

The meaning

"Because"—she hesitated, approached, and put a hand on his arm. "Because, you poor, lonely, and very old young man, I am the chap who lives upstairs."

"What nonsense! You——"

"I am the chap who lives upstairs, and I hear your bath water splashing into the bath, and I hear your slippers flapping down the passage, and I hear your door bang out its greeting. And all these things have become part of my life in some awfully silly way, that only people who live the awfully silly lives you and I seem to live would understand."

He had sunk into a chair and was staring at her blankly.

"But the advertisement in the paper?"

"I put in that advertisement." She sounded very ashamed of herself.

"Those extraordinary clothes?"

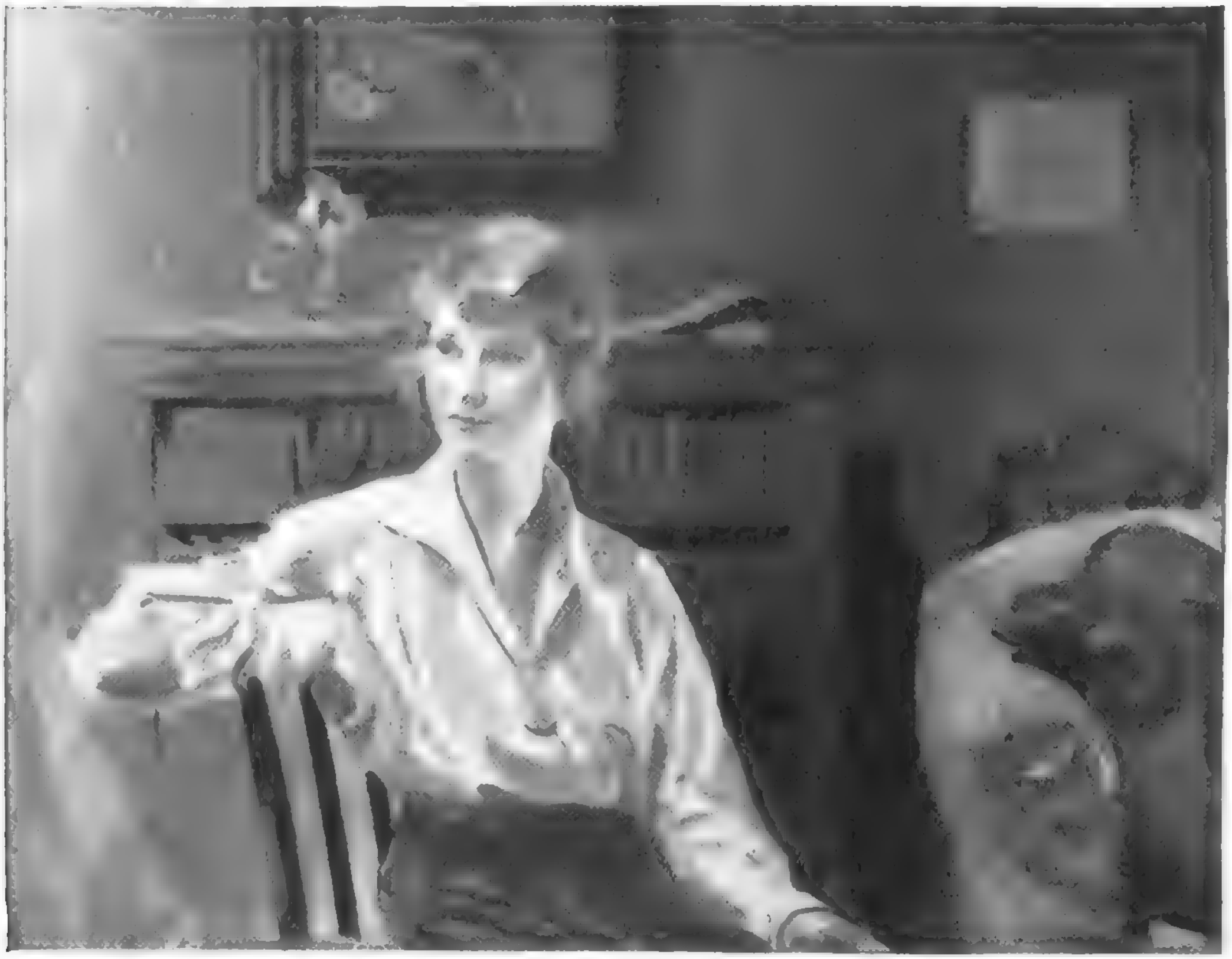
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" I've often sat beside you at the cinema and seen how your eyes lighted up when the orphans came in."

He nodded, and she went on :—

" At first I was only mildly interested in you, then I got more interested, and at last dreadfully interested ; " and when a woman



answered, " the chap who lives upstairs generally comes in. I—too—am going upstairs." was unmistakable.

gets dreadfully interested it can't stop there. I didn't know how I could get into this flat and see it—and you—so I thought of this very elaborate, and rather deceitful, and a little bit disreputable plan."

She was staring at the carpet when the confession came to an end.

He rose and took a turn up and down the room. He stopped before her.

" Well," said he, " and now you've seen the flat and its owner, are you sorry you came down from upstairs ? "

" No—I'm glad," she answered.

" And are you an orphan ? "

She nodded.

" Yes, please. But I had to buy those dreadful boots—mine were too smart. I'm afraid I'm rather a rich orphan."

But he would not allow that.

" As yet we're both poor orphans," said he. " Our fortunes await us."

With a sudden inspiration he raised his head to look at the ceiling.

" You're listening," said Mary.

" No."

" Surely you believe I am the chap who lives upstairs ? "

" I believe it."

" But you're still listening."

" No, I'm wondering," he replied. " I'm wondering if two flats could be converted into one. I'm wondering if a landlord would approve the idea of a spiral staircase that—— " He turned and looked at her fearlessly—possessively. " Shall we sit down and talk this thing out ? "

And she answered :—

" Yes, if you please, Daddy Long Legs."

WHEN Roberts came in to clear away the tea things a few minutes later they were sitting side by side on the sofa and he was calling her " Pollyanna."

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The MARRIAGE MAZE

by Charles Kingston

ILLUSTRATED BY A. K. MACDONALD.

THE love which levels all ranks has been responsible for almost as much litigation as romance, and huge sums of money have been spent to prove or disprove marriages which self-interest and discretion caused to be celebrated secretly when the lovers were young and romantic. If we confine ourselves to names to be found in "Debrett," we see that earls have married domestic servants; a peeress an Arab sheikh; a countess has led to the altar her coachman, and a marchioness has given her hand to a shopwalker. There have been many similar *mésalliances*, and even a Bishop of the Established Church has been moved by a sudden infatuation to risk the loss of his mitre. His lordship in his old age flirted too successfully at the seaside with a lady who had acquired a reputation at the expense of her character, and when he married her the scandal was so great that he was compelled to resign.

There was an Earl of Berkeley who would have given all he possessed to satisfy the world that Mary Cole, the daughter of the Gloucester butcher, had been his wife years before the public ceremony which preceded the birth of his last four children; while the seventh Earl of Stair was no less desirous of disproving his. Both failed, and in the case of the former the effects can be felt to this day, there being no heir to the earldom, although there are descendants in the male line of two of Mary Cole's sons by her husband, the earl who wooed and won her when she was assisting in her father's shop. Lord Stair was a youngster of nineteen when he fell in love with Johanna Gordon, the daughter of an Edinburgh gentleman of good social position. But when his regiment was ordered abroad he speedily forgot the young lady, although they had accepted each other as husband and wife in Scottish fashion, and on his return to London he married a niece of the Duchess of Rutland. When Johanna heard of this she brought an action, claiming to be Mrs. John Dalrymple, and as the Court delivered judgment in her favour, holding that Dalrymple and Miss Gordon had been secretly married in Edinburgh, it followed that the English lady was no wife. But the judgment did not bring the former lovers together, and Dalrymple never saw his wife again, and shortly before he succeeded to the peerage he divorced her. Johanna, however, insisted on styling herself Countess of Stair to the day of her death, doubtless incited thereto by the knowledge that the lady Dalrymple had bigamously married in London had subsequently become a peeress in her own right.

BUT the greatest of all marriage puzzles was that which led to the famous Mountgarret Peerage case in the 'fifties of the last century. The victor lived until 1900, and he must have been grateful to the jury which saved him from obscurity, derision, and poverty by a verdict which did not meet with universal approval. It was "touch and go"

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for many months as to whether plaintiff or defendant would be declared Viscount Mountgarret, and all the trouble was due to a reckless *roué* and a woman whose mutable temperament was only equalled by her extravagance and cupidity.

The Hon. Henry Butler, third son of the eleventh Viscount Mountgarret, was a practitioner of pleasure who played havoc with his fortune and the numerous credulous and silly women on whom his handsome face and figure made an irresistible impression. As long as his money lasted he was in no mood for matrimony, but when he was penniless, and his creditors in Ireland and England were in full cry after him, he sought refuge at Brighton, where he was introduced to Mrs. Colebrooke, a pretty widow with fifteen hundred a year of her own and another thousand which had been bequeathed to her by her late husband for the maintenance of their two daughters. Mrs. Colebrooke succumbed at once to Butler's love-making, but when he proposed she staggered him with the information that under the terms of the late Colonel Colebrooke's will she forfeited her means if she married again. This was a cold douche to the impetuous Irishman, but it did not separate them, and they had been intimate friends for a couple of years when the widow suggested that if they were married secretly in Scotland she would thus be able to enjoy her income and he would not lose the lady he professed to adore. He agreed, and they set out for Edinburgh, Mrs. Colebrooke arriving first and taking up her residence in her own house, while the son of the Irish peer quartered himself on a friend, who proved so convivial and accommodating that Butler delayed calling on his *fiancée*. The latter, however, was never lonely. She had the entrée to the best Edinburgh society, and, possessing as she did a large and convenient affection for all mankind, she speedily found a successor to Butler. This, oddly enough, was another Irishman, though of a totally different stamp. John Taaffe, son of a gentleman of large fortune, had come to the Scottish capital to make the acquaintance of its leading *litterateurs*, and it was at a reception held in honour of one of them that he met Mrs. Colebrooke and became enamoured of her. She appears to have thrown herself at his head, for Taaffe was speedily promoted to the position of favourite lover, and there is plenty of evidence that the lady actually asked him to marry her. They were discussing ways and means the night Henry Butler, maddened by drink, forced his way into the house and, by the violence of his language, indicated that he had at last heard of his rival's existence. In vain did Mrs. Colebrooke assure him that he was mistaken; vainly did she protest that she did not know where John Taaffe was—at that very moment he was huddling behind the door in front of which the widow was standing. Butler, unwilling to lose the right to control the spending of two thousand five hundred pounds a year, insisted on their marriage being celebrated there and then, and at his request three servants were called to the landing to witness it. At this point, however, there is a disagreement. At the trial counsel for the defendant declared that the marriage had not taken place; the plaintiff insisted that it had. Anyhow; something happened to quieten Butler, for he left the house, and Mrs. Colebrooke never met him again.

A few days later she and Taaffe were married by a Roman Catholic priest at Preston, and the same year the Hon. Henry Butler, who had sworn to kill anyone who supplanted him in the affections of the wealthy Scotswoman, went to Harrogate, encountered a friend there who introduced him to Miss Anne Harrison, proposed to her, was accepted, and married her at Brighton. Twelve months afterwards Butler's wife gave birth to a son, who was now in direct succession to the peerage of Mountgarret—presuming Butler had not declared Mrs. Colebrooke to be his wife at that encounter in the house in Edinburgh. From this point Butler's

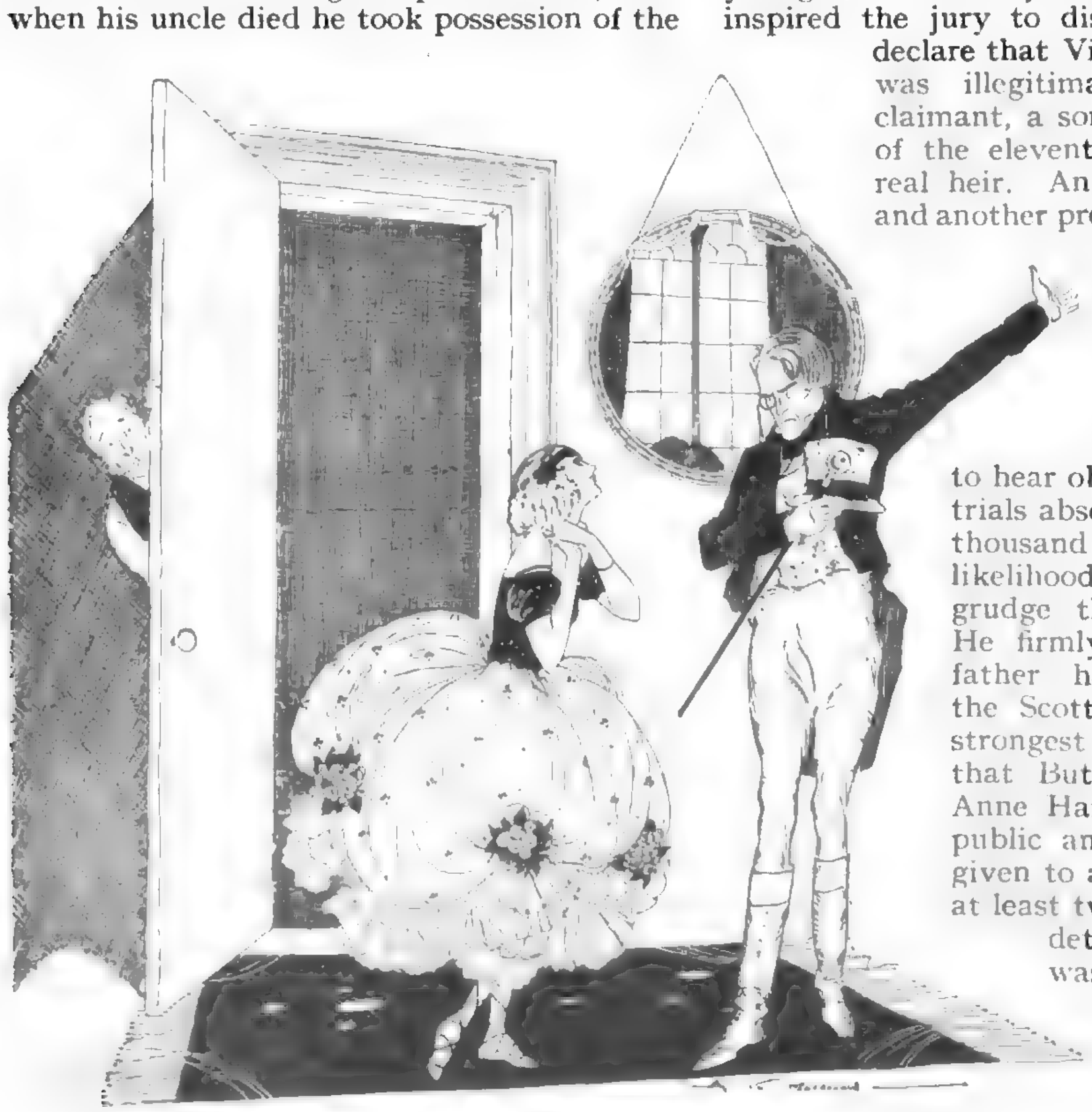


Even a Bishop has been moved by a sudden infatuation to risk the loss of his mitre.

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life seems to have been less stormy. No doubt his wife's money bought off his most persistent creditors, and he found in domesticity something more attractive than drink and dissipation. But Mrs. Colebrooke's fortunes were less enviable. She was not the sort of companion John Taaffe wanted, and when he discovered a letter in her desk which revealed her intrigue with Henry Butler he at once left her and exiled himself to Italy, where he eventually died. The widow was not dismayed by the desertion until the Scottish courts deprived her of the guardianship of her children, which involved the loss of a thousand a year, and, as it synchronized with the descent of her creditors on her own income, which reduced her to a penniless condition, she sought for someone to support her, and, knowing that Taaffe was rich and Butler poor, she sued the former. Colonel Taaffe entered a defence on behalf of his son, and the Scottish court favoured the defendant, who was adjudged not to be the legal husband of Mrs. Colebrooke. As a last resource she now communicated with Butler and there was a correspondence between them, but it came to nothing. In course of time death took her and the Irishman, and Anne Harrison brought up her child, and when his uncle died he took possession of the title and estates. That was in 1846, and, although there were many queer rumours concerning the parentage of the new viscount, it was not until several years afterwards that the son of his father's younger brother claimed the coronet and the property, on the ground that the holder of the peerage was illegitimate, his father having had a wife living, in the person of Mrs. Colebrooke, when he went through a ceremony of marriage with Anne Harrison at Brighton.

It will be seen what a fine crop of litigation the complicated love-affairs of the Hon. Henry Butler and Mrs. Colebrooke promised for the lawyers, and when the trial opened before a Kilkenny jury everybody was aware that it was merely a preliminary encounter, for the loser was bound to appeal, in view of the vast issues at stake. For four days counsel battled on behalf of their respective clients, and the past was dragged up and paraded before the world. An ancient servant, Sarah Stride, the last survivor of the domestics Mrs. Colebrooke had employed in the long ago, swore that her mistress had not been married to Henry Butler on the landing of the house in Edinburgh. Now, Sarah had sworn to the contrary when many years younger, and it may have been that which inspired the jury to disbelieve her and to declare that Viscount Mountgarret was illegitimate and that the claimant, a son of the fourth son of the eleventh viscount, was the real heir. An appeal was entered and another protracted trial ensued, but this time Anne Harrison's son gained a complete victory, a victory which was not gainsaid by the judges who sat specially to hear objections to it. The trials absorbed nearly twenty thousand pounds, but in all likelihood the victor did not grudge the spending of it. He firmly believed that his father had never married the Scottish widow, and the strongest proof of this was that Butler's marriage with Anne Harrison took place in public and notice of it was given to all his friends, while at least two papers published details of it. And it was not likely that the Hon. Henry Butler would run the risk of committing bigamy. Yet it must not be



Vainly did she protest that she did not know where John Taaffe was.

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forgotten that a Scottish court found that John Taaffe was not Mrs. Colebrooke's husband, although she had married him at Preston !

There was nothing secretive about the marriage of the eighth Earl of Stamford and Martha Solomon, and when the news reached England that the aristocratic clergyman, who held a living in Cape Town, had married for the third time, it was assumed that he had chosen with discretion, for he was elderly and circumspect. When, however, it was learnt that the bride was the daughter of as black a Negress as could be found in Africa there was general astonishment. Minor members of titled families had been known to succumb to the fascination of the East and take Oriental wives, but this was the first time a peer of the realm had intermarried with the black races. The humorists could not resist the temptation, especially when they heard that his lordship was daily looking forward to the birth of a son and heir. It was rumoured that the child might take after its grandmother—in which case it was possible that King George would have been greeted at his Coronation by an ebony earl with woolly hair and thick lips—but the child proved to be a girl, and when the eighth earl died he was succeeded by his nephew, and the black strain passed out of a family which can boast of its descent from royalty. In fairness to the South African lady it must be recorded that her husband was able to say on his deathbed that he had never had any cause to regret his marriage.

When Lord Stamford was rector of a large Cape Town parish he was consulted by a young man of the name of Creswell, who wished to marry a widow with three children. The clergyman shrewdly questioned him, and his caller having admitted that he had no means and that he was dependent entirely on an aunt, his reverence advised him to return to England and obtain her consent before making the widow Mrs. Creswell. It was obvious and very sound advice, and Creswell took the next boat home, accompanied by his *fiancée* and her family. Now his aunt, Miss Crowdy, had always treated him with great generosity, and he anticipated no trouble from her, but he was disappointed, for when the two ladies met their politeness was so excessive as to be akin to hostility, and Miss Crowdy did not trouble to conceal her disapproval of her nephew's choice. However, she was not fond of quarrelling, and her knowledge of men, and of Creswell in particular, enabled her to solve the difficulty. In effect, her decision was—" I will allow you three hundred pounds a year as long as you remain unmarried to the widow." It was a novel and startling proposition, but Creswell, who had no vulgar prejudices against laziness, accepted it, and thus the romance ended in an annuity. For a couple of years the money was paid, but as time dimmed the memory of her triumph Miss Crowdy became convinced that she was paying too dearly for it. It is probable, too, that when she made the offer she believed that Creswell would fall in love with someone else and renounce the allowance, but her nephew seemed quite willing to grow into an unromantic middle age at her expense, and Miss Crowdy now realized that she might be thousands of pounds out of pocket before she died. The consequences of her altered frame of mind were that Creswell found himself deprived of his means and his " free and holiday-rejoicing spirit " perilously near the region of work, and, undeterred by threats of ridicule and unafraid of the publicity of the Press, he brought an action in the High Court to recover arrears of his annuity and to obtain a legal declaration that his aunt must maintain him all the days of his bachelorhood. Of course, the trial intrigued the whole country, and the most crapulous of lawyers could justify its universal appeal because it was without precedent. Thousands of persons had been made to pay because they would not marry, but never before had anyone claimed to be paid for remaining single. It was a case made for such a judge as Mr. Justice Darling, but when Creswell *v.* Crowdy was called by the court usher Sir Charles was a member of the Junior Bar, and better acquainted with his own forensic talents than the solicitors were.

Counsel for Miss Crowdy sought to persuade their lordships to dismiss the action on the ground that it was against public policy for a young man to allow himself to be paid to remain in a state of single blessedness. Further, he argued that the contract was not legally valid and was revocable at will. When Mr. Justice Blackburn pointed out that the first argument failed because the plaintiff had not been compelled to refrain from marrying altogether, but only a particular lady, counsel became sentimental and declared that if a man could not marry the woman he loves he would not marry at all. " Oh, that's too romantic for a court of justice," said his lordship, with a smile, but judgment was entered for the plaintiff and Miss Crowdy was left with the care of her nephew to the end of his days.

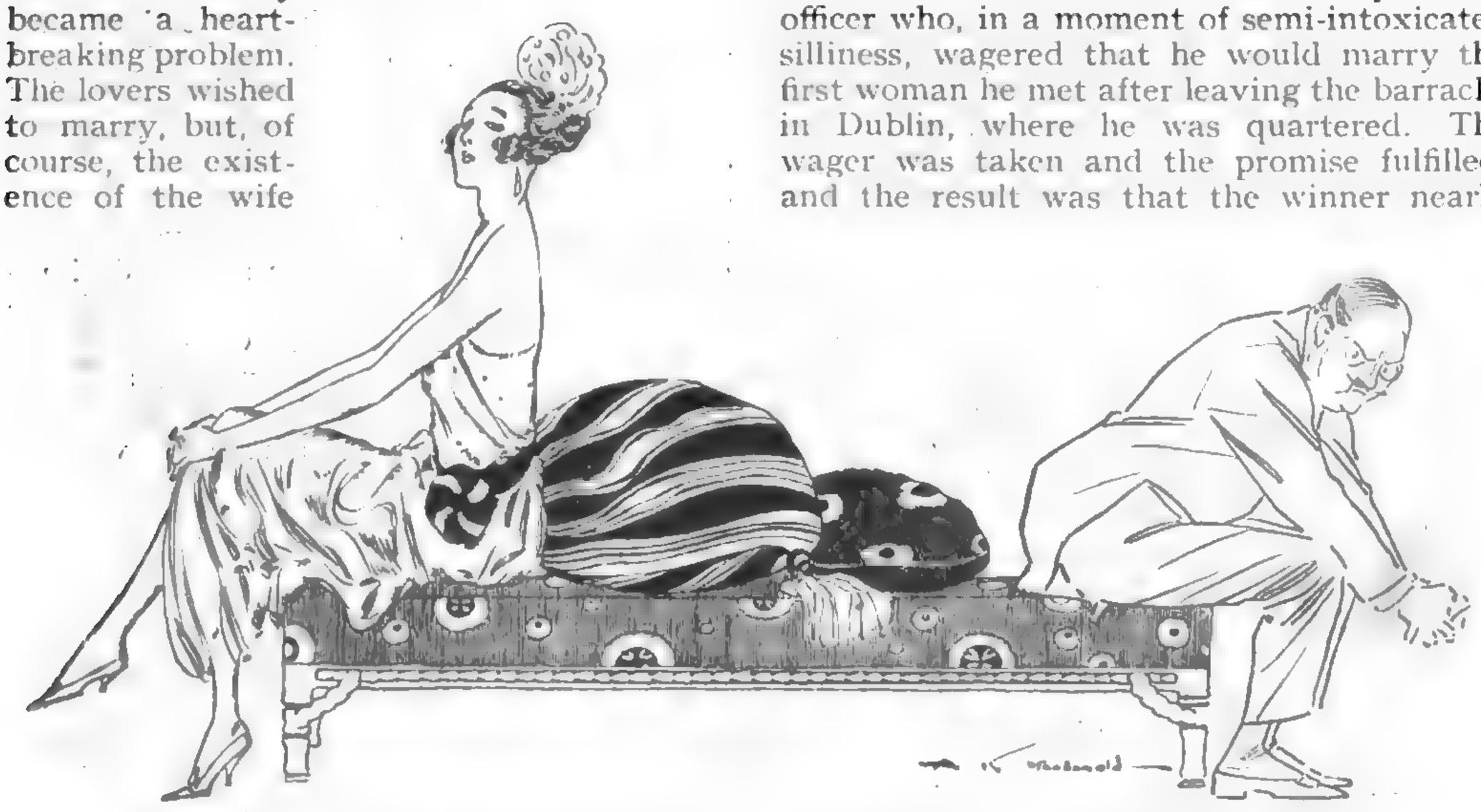
THERE have been several instances where men have been bribed into marriage, and it is less than a couple of years since a young lady successfully claimed payment of an annuity which had been promised her if she would give her hand to a friend of her father's, but on the whole these affairs were commonplace. Marriages of convenience so often prove inconvenient to the contracting

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parties in the long run that their failure has come to be regarded as nothing unusual. The sequel to one of these, however, may be described, because, like the Creswell case, it is unique.

An Indian Civil Servant took to wife a lady of some fortune, and soon repented it. They had no interests in common, and looked at life through different spectacles, and, after a number of attempts to pull together, they separated. Then the man met the one girl he could love, and what had been simply a domestic worry became a heart-breaking problem. The lovers wished to marry, but, of course, the existence of the wife rendered that impossible until the Civil Servant was unexpectedly put in the position to sue for divorce. When he had obtained a decree in his favour he made preparations for his second wedding; but on the day before that appointed for the ceremony the Court of Appeal reversed the decision, and he was once again a married man and the young lady who had waited so patiently for him was suddenly put beyond his reach. The lovers were frantic in their disappointment, for there appeared to be no way past the barrier the law had erected between them. But lovers can laugh at law-makers as well as locksmiths, and just when all seemed lost the Civil Servant had an idea which he ascribed to sheer inspiration. He recollected that Mohammedans are permitted by the Prophet to have four wives, and he suggested to the lady that they should both embrace the tenets of Islam and thereby qualify to marry each other. The plan was carried out, and the natives had the felicity of witnessing the "conversion" of a Sahib, and there were great rejoicings when the Mohammedan marriage was celebrated according to the picturesque rites of the East. But the Indian Government did not view favourably this method of popularizing Great Britain amongst the masses, and, instead of a wedding present, the Civil Servant was given the Order of the Sack. However, he was a man of character and determination, and, although verging on middle age, he set to work to study for the Bar, was called in London, and then returned to the East and practised.

There was some method in his madness, but there was none in that of the youthful officer who, in a moment of semi-intoxicated silliness, wagered that he would marry the first woman he met after leaving the barracks in Dublin, where he was quartered. The wager was taken and the promise fulfilled, and the result was that the winner nearly wrecked his life, for the officer succeeded to an earldom some years later and the girl he had given his name to, a domestic servant whose father was a pilot at Portsmouth, became a countess, from whom he had long been separated. This is the barest outline of the causes which led to the celebrated Poulett Peerage Case in the House of Lords, and Londoners will be able to recall the oddly pathetic figure of the self-styled "Viscount Hinton" whose peregrinations were so common a feature of the West-end some twenty years ago. The "Viscount" was Bessy Newman's son, but not Lord Poulett's; when his claim to the earldom failed and the only son by the earl's third wife succeeded to the title and estates, the organ-grinder faded into obscurity, and when he died there was hardly a paper to give him more than a few lines. But that brainless prank of the grandfather of the present holder of the title cost him thousands of pounds and almost endless worry, and in his old age the sixth Lord Poulett must have marvelled that he could ever have been so foolish.



Marriages of convenience often prove inconvenient to the contracting parties.

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